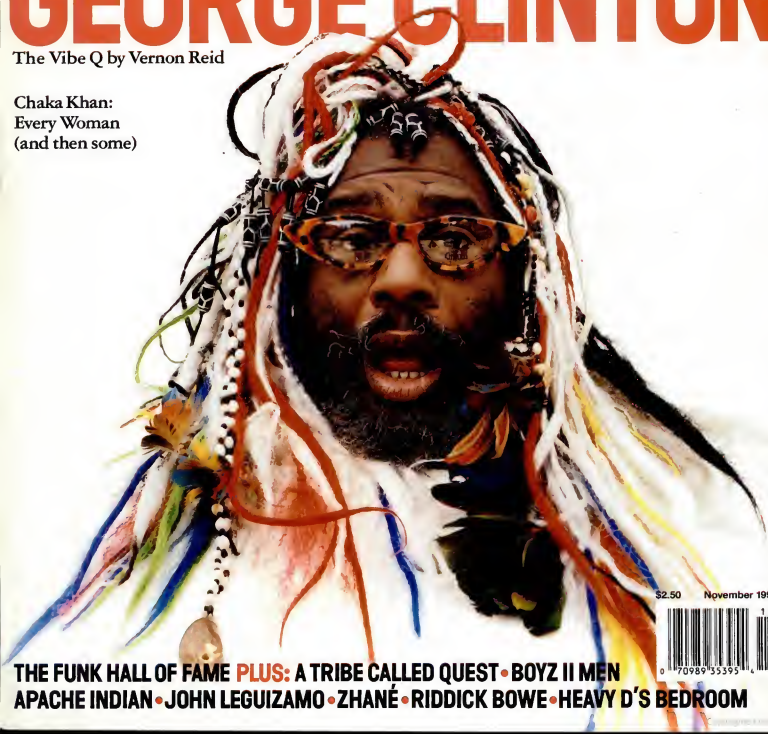


# VIBE

## GEORGE CLINTON

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November 1993



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**OF LOVE**  
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**BLIND**  
**CAVEFISH**



JOOP! JEANS  
JUST A THOUGHT.



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SINGLE FILE. *By James Hunter*  
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## CONTRIBUTORS

### Vernon Reid

London-born Vernon Reid is probably best known as the guitarist of the rock band Living Colour. Reid, who interviewed George Clinton for this issue (page 44), says the Maggot Overlord is "one of the three funkiest men that ever lived; the others being Sly Stone and James Brown." A longtime fan, Reid says, "Clinton's music is about the funk, unity, and love—the kind of love that's sorely lacking in today's music." Practically a walking cult of personality, Reid is a founder of the Black Rock Coalition, a writer, a photographer, and is currently finishing up a film score for the director Shulea Cheang. His writing has appeared in *The Village Voice*, *Spin*, *Guitar World*, and in the book *Rolling Stone The 100 Greatest Albums of the 80's*. He lives in Staten Island.

### Ntozake Shange

Feminist, poet, playwright, academic, novelist, screenwriter, and musician Ntozake Shange was inspired to write the text to "L.A. Stories" (page 76) upon seeing the photographs. They reminded her of living near Watts once. Well known for her staged poem for colored girls who have considered suicide when the rainbow is unafraid, Shange just completed a novel, *Resurrection of the Daughter: Liliane*, St. Martin's Press. She lives in Philadelphia.

### Christian Witkin

Photographer Christian Witkin, 27, who shot *Vibe's* cover this month, says George Clinton was a one-man show in front of the camera—requiring no direction and exhibiting no ego. "Clinton was so expressive that the shoot was very natural; there was nothing he would not do—from flipping back his eyelids to grimacing while smelling his fingers." Witkin, who also shot Buju Banton for the October issue, is working on a personal project photographing people on New York City's streets. "They are not necessarily bums or homeless people," he says, "just strange, odd-looking characters with a scary impact." He has contributed to *Spin*, *Playboy*, and *The Village Voice*.

### Frank Owen

Writer Frank Owen says '80s DJ/shaman Larry Levan and his now-defunct underground nightclub, the Paradise Garage, had a tremendous influence on him. "Larry was key in directing me to spirituality—I never felt religion like I felt it at the Garage." Owen moved to New York City five years ago from Manchester, England, just months after meeting his wife at the club. He says "Paradise Lost" (page 62) is an elegy to an era in New York nightlife now ended because of AIDS, bad drugs, rising real estate costs, and a general shift away

from integrationist cultural politics. Aside from writing about popular music for *New York*, *Nasty*, Owen has contributed to *Elle*, *The Village Voice*, and *Spin*.

### Dana Lixenberg

Twenty-nine-year-old Dutch photographer Dana Lixenberg, who photographed Watts residents for "L.A. Stories" (page 76), says she wants readers "to look at these pictures and see different people without putting a stamp on them; if people become curious about the subjects or the community then I'm happy." Lixenberg came to New York from Amsterdam four years ago in her third year of art school on an apprenticeship program. She traveled to Watts with a grant from the government of Holland and has contributed to the Dutch publications *Avenue*, *Vrij Nederland*, *HP/De Tijd*, and *Het Parool*.

### Christopher Seymour

While Christopher Seymour, 28, was interviewing Korean youth about the racism they experience living in Japan ("It's a Black Thing," page 98), he found that his subjects "seemed surprised and thankful to be able to talk about it for a foreign publication. Japan's problems are just as serious as America's, if not worse because they are not talking about them." Seymour, who's lived in Japan for the past three years, is currently living with a *yakuzas* (read: mob) gang for a book to be published next year by Atlantic Monthly Press. He has contributed to *Details*, *Playboy*, *The Village Voice*, and *British GQ*.



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# He's Back.



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Have you seen it? Yeah, my boy Y. had a copy the other night. We picked up some Senegalese food before heading over to Fort Greene Park for a 10 p.m. picnic. I kept it close to me, under his possessive gaze, like a new toy, keeping it folded to the story I wanted to read. Yeah, so the only pieces I got to read were Greg Tate's fiction ["After All the Clowns Have Gone to Bed," September] juxtaposed with a fantastic fashion spread of like theme and interview with Byron Lars. Still, desirous of a larger sampling, I spent the next week approaching 20 kiosk owners, getting

the same response to my inquiries—"No, we run out"—what I regret I didn't do when the word first hit the street. "Oh, I saw it but I didn't buy it," from my girl N., because she happened to be having a self-empowering "No" day that week. What? Well no, I would not call anyone I knew who could get me a copy, because this is New York and sometimes you have to give yourself dap. When I eventually did come across a copy, though, it became the last Now & Later to be sucked late at night when no one else could ask for some. It was nice to read a magazine that was unselfconsciously taking some risks for a change. Politics? Well, I can say that if the need arises I won't be purchasing a .22 or .25, but I'm not too sure if Bónz Malone's piece ["Misda Manners"] was a buyer's guide to nihilism or what. Props to Sister Carol for maintaining her righteousness in what can be an unrighteous space for potential reggae divas [Elena Oumano, "Daughters of the Dance"]. As for the Snoop Doggy Dogg cover story [Kevin Powell, "Hot Dogg"], well, length does not a Pulitzer make. A. B. WHITE, BROOKLYN

**Your September issue has a permanent place on my coffee table. Thank you for showcasing the talent of photographer Ruven Afanador ("Byron Large"). His editorial is the most exciting I've seen in any American magazine in a long time. And the models are beautiful. As an African-Caribbean model with Great premiere! Good luck. (1) You can never have too many record reviews. Tape and especially CD prices are so high, the buyer can't afford to make mistakes. More review! (2) Since Marky Mark joined Shabba Ranks on the BBC-TV show in advocating genocide against the world's 200 million gay men, every time I see M. M.'s underwear ads, I think of when I was almost killed for being gay. (3) Take a stand. Dump the subscription service from neo-Nazi Colorado!** JIM DAVIS, ELIZABETH, NJ



I've only been listening to reggae for about two years—respect to Clint O'Neil of WLRN in Miami, Kevin Nash of the KMEI Reggae Dancehall Posse in San Francisco, Omar Doe of KBFB in Santa Rosa, and Akilah, the Woman Dread of KPFA in Berkeley—mostly thanks to the above-mentioned DJs. In that time I've noticed two things: One, most of the radio DJs don't play a lot of music by female reggae artists (save Akilah, whose show is almost exclusively dedicated to women's reggae); and two, there's a lack of female reggae artists' music in record stores. This says something, but I'm not sure what. I'd never really given the issue much thought until I read Elena Oumano's article "Daughters of the Dance" [September]. With the strong voice of promising newcomers like Carla Marshall and Patra leading the way, hopefully the sisters of reggae will come on strong in '93 and '94. Keep up the coverage of reggae music. GLEN DWAYNE WARNER, BLOOMINGTON, IN

I am a 27-year-old female who lost

interest in hip hop a few years ago. Now

I'm elated to say that I've found my way

back. The only thing about it was, I

didn't feel comfortable purchasing and

reading some of the other magazines,

because they are geared to a younger

generation. When I picked up the Sep-

tember issue of Vibe, I read it from cover

to cover. There is a definite maturity

here. The photography is cool. The

articles and interviews are impres-

sive. And the diversity of black people

throughout it is immensely appreci-

ated! MAD "DM" WONG, HARBOR CITY, CA

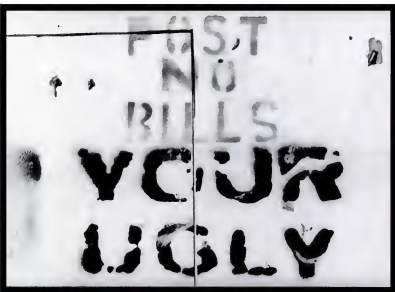
twists in the hair, I know that American editorials are hard to come by. I hope that the other magazines in town (i.e. Condé Nast's) will "get a clue" and use models as strong and beautiful. Vibe has opened the door just a little more for all of the yet-unseen talents of our community.

TRACEE KIM, STUDIO CITY, CA

## MAIL

First off, what took Vibe so long to bring out a second issue? (1) I agree with Scott Poulson-Bryant's "Just a Word" [Start, September], but the fact is if I trashed all my rap-artist CDs that use the N-word, I would have no rap music left! I'm talking Cube, Ice-T, PE, MC Lyte, etc. (2) Kevin Powell was way off in his review of Cypress Hill's *Black Sunday* [Revolutions, September]. Listen to it again. (3) Do you think Poulson-Bryant or Greg Tate would do a story on black rock bands like Mother's Finest, Follow For Now, Eye & I, 24-7 Spyz, Fishbone, Living Colour, Jon Butcher, Family Stand? Also, how do you get a copy of the *Women in Love* album? (4) Who are Reg E. Gaines, Nicole Breedlove, and 99? Inquiring minds wanna know. (5) Cool writers, subjects, everything. I'm ready for the next issue. EO SCOTT, CHARLESTON, SC

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Gaines, Breedlove, and 99 are poets based in New York City. For more information about the *Women in Love* album, Yo Wassup Witcha Skinhead Muhfukuh, you can write to Greg Tate, c/o The Village Voice, 36 Cooper Square, N.Y., N.Y. 10003. I read Billy Jam's little interview with Paleface ["Blue-Eyed Devil," September]. It was an insight into the mind of one white asshole. Paleface says Ice Cube was talking about the whole race. So what if he was? He doesn't have to take it personally. That's like me getting pissed when I hear a rapper say, "Bitches ain't shit but ho's and tricks." (Dr. Dre and Snoop, I love the song.) I don't take it personally because they never met me. They mean someone else. I think Paleface had better "Check yo' self before you wreck yo' self," 'cause talking shit about Cube is bad for your health. GENELL GOODSON, WATERBURY, CT



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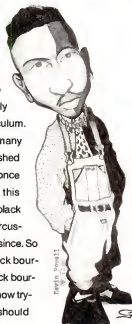
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HUSH

That's it! Having received and read the September issue of *Vibe*, I want you to please cancel my subscription. What I suspected after reading the preview issue has been confirmed by that one. Where in any dictionary does it state that an art form or even just entertainment must express a middle-class and/or a politically correct point of view? And since when did that become the paragon of virtue? Being a black person who was a teenager in the '60s—a very crucial time for black progress—I watched as the black middle class headed the so-called poverty programs and misappropriated so much of the funds that the programs were shut down. I also watched as this same class pushed for integration into schools where they were proud to absorb the totally Eurocentric Christian curriculum. And, I also witnessed how many of the black middle class rushed to marry into the white race once the miscegenation laws of this country were dropped. Real black folks have suffered the repercussions of those betrayals ever since. So it's bogus that the older black bourgeoisie and the younger black bourgeoisie—*Vibe*'s staff—are now trying to define what hip hop should be. No real hip hop magazine would



Powell to the people:  
Gus Wiley, a University  
of Cincinnati student,  
sent in this illustration.

have an article like “Just a Word” by Scott Poulson-Bryant [Start]. Niggas please. When, if ever, will the black bourgeoisie learn that no matter how well black people behave—that is, how good a white impersonator one becomes—white people will always be on our backs? It is and always has been in their gene pool; it's their real job. So please, once and for all, stop worrying about what the white man thinks. That would be truly revolutionary. And, oh yes, shame on Ice Cube for dissing white people [“Paleface: Blue-Eyed Devil,” Start]. Hey y'all, dissing is a whole lot of what rap is about. And why not diss white people? White people have been dissing blacks every day and in every way since forever. Lookahere, Cube is an icon, so Paleface should shut the fuck up and show some respect. If it weren't for Cube, Paleface wouldn't even know how to rap. And who the hell is Paleface anyway? Only *Vibe* would know. Why aren't you people writing articles about Luther, Whitney, Natalie, and Patti? I doubt it's because of any real understanding of hip hop culture, but

*VIBE* encourages mail and photographs from readers. Please send letters to *VIBE* Mail, 205 Lexington Avenue, 3rd Floor, New York, NY 10016. Send photos to *VIBE* Drivby Shooting (same address). Include your full name, address, and daytime phone number. Letters may be edited for length and clarity. Photo submissions will become the property of *VIBE* and will not be returned.

rather your need to control. Traditionally, the only real power the black middle class has had come from controlling the black poor or street people. That rap sprung from black street culture and has become a multimillion-dollar industry without expressing middle-class viewpoints grades on black middle-class nerves. So finally, a big “Fuck you” to all you bourgeois bitches and hoers at *Vibe*.  
MYRNA E. BROOKS, NEW YORK CITY



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# START

Edited by Rob Kenner

Memories of Michael  
by Scott Paulson Bryant

When I was 12, I interviewed Michael Jackson. He had just completed filming *The Wiz*, black folks were still dancing to *Destiny*, and *Off the Wall* was about to make history. We talked on the phone for about an hour, about how he makes music, about meeting the Queen of England, about wearing the makeup for the *Screamers*, and working with Diana Ross and Sidney Lumet. When my little sister Yami talked to him, he teased her about her age. "How old are you? Seven? When will you be six?" He made us laugh; I remember thinking how distinctly different his flat, Midwestern speaking voice was from his recorded falsetto growls. I also remember feeling like I was talking to another kid.

A number-one single at age 11, a superstar at 12, a cartoon character soon after; Michael Jackson never had a life. When he did, we were watching, fascinated, and clapping, always eager for more—one more picture, one more song, one more story. In 1987, Michael Jackson released *Bad*, for which he wrote and sang "Another Part of Me" and "Leave Me Alone." There you have the enduring ethos of American celebrity—love me and leave me alone—personified by Michael Jackson, the most famous man in the world. That's the crazy relationship we have with fame, and the

famous have with us: this constant give-and-take must always be unbalanced, an awkward two-step danced to lyrics like "Enquiring minds want to know." What do they want to know? Do they want to know how Michael Jackson manages to sound like he's the musical offspring of Jackie Wilson and Marvin Staples? That he's a vocal virtuoso, brimming with a soulfulness that outpaces his more showbizzy pop moves by such a wide margin that God-given talent doesn't begin to do it justice? Or do they want to know that he's a virgin? That he and La Toya don't speak anymore?

Of course he did it; well I just don't believe he did it. It's like a parlor game; your turn. Michael Jackson decided to play by the rules and talk to Oprah Winfrey, to tell us what enquiring minds want to know. Having talked to Michael myself, I kept wanting him to break into song as Oprah probed and asked questions. I wanted him to sing, because that's how he communicates, that's where his life is. Peter Pan or Perverf? some tabloid asked during the hot August scandal days. Is it that simple? Is that the ultimate choice we make about our celebrities, is that how duplicitous we become in the game of fame? The time has come to choose one: the voice we know and love or the controversy we feed on.

## AFFIDAVIT U.S. DISTRICT COURT

CARLTON RIDENHOUR,  
professionally known as CHUCK D,  
v. THE ST. IDES BREWING CO.

GRETCHEN GARDNER, being duly sworn, deposes and says:

I am a single working mother living in a predominantly Black neighborhood with my son, Samuel Gardner, who at the time of the events described in this affidavit, was sixteen years of age. I work for the Writer's Guild of America, where I have been an administrative assistant for nine years.

Since as early as the beginning of 1991, in the neighborhood where my son and I live, St. Ides Malt Liquor has been a pervasive presence. St. Ides had been promoted with posters throughout the community, featuring rap stars who are especially popular with Black teenagers, and the product has been advertised on rap music programs both on radio and on television. St. Ides is promoted and sold in liquor stores and/or grocery stores on nearly every block.

On one occasion, I observed a St. Ides representative attempting to distribute St. Ides promotional rap music audiocassettes and posters to three sixteen-year-old boys, including my son, in the parking lot of the grocery store where my son works. He wore a St. Ides logo and was operating out of a vehicle marked with the St. Ides name and logo on its side.

When I complained to this representative about his solicitation of teenagers, he told me that he was aware that he was soliciting teenagers, but that he was only doing his job. Neither he nor the store owner was willing to talk me his name.

Because of the devastating effects of alcohol abuse in our neighborhood, and partly because two of my brothers are alcoholics addicted to malt liquor, I have tried very hard to steer my son away from malt liquor and other alcohol products.

As a part of this effort, I have tried to find role models for my son, as an alternative to celebrities who promote alcohol. In particular, I have encouraged my son's interest in Chuck D, because of Chuck D's opposition to alcohol abuse, and because of Chuck D's promotion of education, discipline and self-respect.

For example, I accompanied my son to a Public Enemy concert in Anaheim, California several years ago. At that concert, almost the entire audience, including my son, referred to Chuck D as "Number One," as in his rap lyric, "I'm Public Enemy Number One," chanting this nickname over and over again when he appeared on stage.

By the summer of 1991, Chuck D had become my son's favorite hero. My son had memorized many of Chuck D's lyrics from his albums,

including the line, "I never heard the boos—I never drank booze," as printed on the album lyric sheets. My son and I also watched Chuck D on Black Entertainment Television warning the public about malt liquor, saying that it "deadens your brain." As a result of the facts described in this and the above paragraphs, my son became strongly opposed to malt liquor.

In July of 1991, while I was driving with my son and listening to a Black Radio station (FM 102.3), we heard an advertisement in which it appeared that Chuck D was endorsing St. Ides Malt Liquor by repeatedly referring to it as "number one" and "incredible." My son and I were both shocked to hear Chuck D endorsing this product. My son asked me how it could be that a person like Chuck D could do such a thing, but I had no explanation. It was plain to me, and to my son, that Chuck D was willingly participating in this advertisement for money, and that it would be impossible for a company like St. Ides to use his voice to endorse a product in a commercial without his permission.

My son told me over and over again that in his opinion, Chuck D was a sell-out and a traitor who was more concerned about money than principles. My son was so upset that I had to pull our car over to the side of the road to try and calm him down.

When we arrived home, my son immediately went into his bedroom, tore down his larger-

than-life poster of Chuck D, crumpled it into a ball, and threw it into a trash can, saying that he never wanted to listen to or hear about Chuck D ever again.

My son told me that because of the St. Ides commercial, he never wanted to buy another Public Enemy recording or go to a Public Enemy concert. In December of 1991, when Public Enemy was scheduled to perform at the Forum in Inglewood, California, my son did not attend, even though two of his friends wanted him to go. In general, for weeks after hearing the St. Ides commercial, Samuel was very upset about it. He spent an unusual amount of time sulking and staying in his bedroom.

In January of 1992, however, my son's mood changed dramatically, when he received a flyer in the mail, alerting him that Chuck D had sued the makers of the St. Ides commercial for using his voice without permission. This flyer, which I understand was mailed to persons who had purchased Public Enemy-related T-shirts or baseball caps by mail order, caused my son to be ecstatic. To my knowledge, this was the first information that either of us had received or seen with respect to this lawsuit or Chuck D's legal claim against St. Ides.

I stepped forward to be a witness in this case voluntarily. No one has ever asked me to be a witness. I have received no payment for my testimony, nor do I expect to receive any. My only interest is in telling the court and the jury the truth....

As this case went to press, this case, which had been scheduled to be heard November 1, was settled out of court for a "substantial amount" of money.





## 411

by Carol Cooper

### AIDS AWARE

Even as he battled a terminal HIV infection, Craig G.

Harris, a black Vassar graduate from the Bronx, became a founding member of one of Washington, D.C.'s, strongest national lobbies for AIDS education and prevention. The

National Minority AIDS Council that Harris left behind could become our best weapon against the AIDS pandemic, if teens and young adults learn to use its resources.

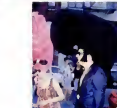
NMAC's central premise is that due to institutionalized racism, people of color are routinely under-researched and underserved when it comes to health care. Founded in 1987, NMAC teaches minorities to organize and secure fund-

ing for self-help groups within their own communities. Ongoing NMAC projects include public-policy education programs, computer training, and yearly national conferences on everything from fundraising to the effects of grieving among AIDS workers.

AIDS has become by far the fastest-growing cause of death among black women in their child-bearing years. NMAC is dedicated to bringing public attention to the fact that minorities age 16 to 25—not white gay males—comprise the largest percentage of new cases. Rap artists like Salt-N-Pepa and Ice Cube have already participated in support activities for NMAC, which continues to find new ways of spreading awareness of the health crisis. Helen Fox is the director of public policy. 202-544-1076.

### WHAT'S THAT ON YOUR HEAD

LIFE CAN BE A DRAG: When do Dee-Lite, Deborah Harry, and RuPaul become art pieces in the crowd? When Westcott hits New York City's Tompkins Square Park and it looks kind of like Halloween on Ecstasy.



PHOTOGRAPH BY JEFF SCOTT HANSEN

Snoop was freed on \$1 million bail, presumably put up by his record label, which maintained at press time that Snoop's nationwide tour and album, *Doggystyle*, would proceed on schedule.

### BOY BOB

First Columbia put out the box set, with everyone from Stevie Wonder to Neil Young paying tribute to Bob Dylan. Everyone, that is, except Sinéad O'Connor (who was booted off the stage at the tribute concert) and Mystery Tramps, a heretofore unknown Bay Area ensemble, who recently released a hip hop version of "Like a Rolling Stone." The track features a lengthy sample of the original song's organ intro and a ghostly snatch of Bob's voice wailing through hip hop, techno, and deep-house mixes. Imago records announced proudly that this was the first sample ever approved by the rock legend. "Dylan, being a street poet, was the first rapper," says Bill Cutler, coproducer of the track, who hopes the single will appeal to fans of all generations. "But there's such a thin line with Dylan purists. They freaked when he plugged in his guitar. But this was meant as a tribute, not a diss." No comment was forthcoming from the Dylan camp, but one source who helped clear the sample said: "People have done so many weird covers of him that he really doesn't have any opinion anymore." The weirdest? Willem Shatner's rendition of Dylan's "Mr. Tambourine Man" read as poetry.



### ATTACK OF THE "JEEP PEOPLE"

New York magazine's August 16 cover story by Michael Gross entitled "The Village Under Siege" decried the influx of "hip hoppers from the outer-borough neighborhoods" in Greenwich Village. Gross invented all sorts of clever terms for the unwelcome kids, calling them "jeep people," "graffiti mongers," or "beer-swilling, obscenely-shouting hordes in boombox cars." But as the article was illustrated almost exclusively with photographs of black and Latino youths, its subtext was loud and clear. Shortly after the piece was published, Vogue editor Anna Wintour confronted Gross at a party, saying, "Michael, how could you?" Was she offended by the article's implicit racism? No, she was worried that it might depress the value of her Village apartment.

### CONSPIRACY THEORY O' THE MONTH

Despite persistent rumors, Snapple is not owned by the Ku Klux Klan. (It stands to reason, therefore, that it does not contain an ingredient that makes black men important.) The soft-drink company recently issued a press release explaining that the "K" on their label stands for kosher. How this one got started is anybody's guess. After all, Digable Planets enjoy "Hanging with the rebels, sipping on a Snapple." Grand Puba, rapping with Mary J. Blige on his last album, says, "I drink a Snapple and I wet my Adam's apple." Even KRS-One found the sturdy glass Snapple bottle useful for beating up racist cops in his song "Boi Boi Boi." That tune, by the way, was released years before Ice-T—the rapper, not the fluid—was even an issue.

# THE MIX

start



Left and below: DMC is #1, but Run and his brother, painter Danny Simmons are two. Above: Patra and her pool-poom-shorts-clad crew move the crowd.



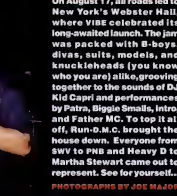
Clockwise: Q on the mike. L.L. Cool J with his girlfriend Kiddada Jones, MC for the evening. MTV's Bill Bellamy tries to get ruff like MC Lyte.



## VIBE BASH

On August 17, all roads led to New York's Webster Hall, where VIBE celebrated its long-awaited launch. The jam was packed with B-boys, divas, suits, models, and knocktends (you know who you are) alike, grooving together to the sounds of DJ Kid Capri and performances by Patra, Biggie Smalls, Intro, and Father MC. To top it all off, Run-DMC brought the house down. Everyone from SWV to PNB and Heavy D to Martha Stewart came out to represent. See for yourself...

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JOE MAJOR



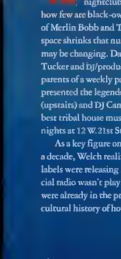
Above: It's Janet...alike! It's Jossie Harris, the In Living Color dancer Miss Jackson, bel her Power pose from.



Clockwise from above: Loungin' with the V.I.P.s, Quincy holds court. Posseboys, of De La Soul; Monica Lynch, of Tommy Boy Records, with VIBE Editor-in-Chief Jonathan Van Meter; and model Cameron—all in the mix.



Clockwise from left: Latin love connection: Lisa Lisa with Madonnina dancers turned singers José and Luis. Music moguls Russell Simmons and Sean "Puffy" Combs get cozy. Quincy with menswear designer Shaka King and Rev. Al Sharpton.



## 41

### CLUBS 'R' US

Manhattan is teeming with famous nightclubs, but you'd be surprised at how few are black-owned or -run. The recent closing of Merlin Bobb and Timmy Regisford's Shelter space shrinks that number even further. But this may be changing. Dancer/choreographer Barbara Tucker and DJ/producer Don Welch are the proud parents of a weekly party that for the last year has presented the legendary "Little" Louis Vega (upstairs) and DJ Camacho (downstairs) mixing the best tribal house music in New York, on Wednesday nights at 12 W. 21st Street.

As a key figure on the R&B club circuit for almost a decade, Welch realized that dozens of small indie labels were releasing innovative music that commercial radio wasn't playing. White-controlled clubs were already in the process of appropriating the cultural history of house by creating their own

terminology for styles that had originated in the black, gay clubs of Detroit and Chicago. They played a lot of the music but didn't necessarily want its black constituency. So Welch and his partner conceived an organization that would protect and develop the labels and artists of this disenfranchised genre.

In the past two years their Underground Network has put together a formidable cadre of singers, dancers, DJs, record-company reps, and radio people—all dedicated to the preservation of the black dance underground. U.N. members come from as far away as Philly and Baltimore, though regular participants tend to hail from the tri-state region (New Jersey, New York, Connecticut). Ultimately, the U.N. hopes to marshal its considerable resources into self-contained businesses that will support themselves. For membership and future events: 212-266-7770 or 718-623-1821.





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Apparel and Footwear



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Goals.

Some are realistic.

Some aren't.

You gotta bust your butt to find out.

One thing's for sure.

Life preys on one dimensional players.

Those who put everything in one basket.

It's not fair.

But you realize,

it's not your ball.

So you've set many goals.

Earn a Ph.D.

Finish a marathon.

Write a screenplay.

Own an N.F.L. team.

Run for President.

Yeah, you're shooting for the stars.

But that's cool.

If you don't make one,

you take what you've learned

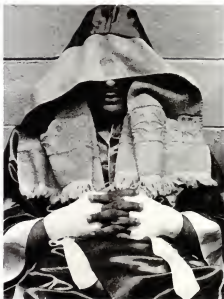
and alter your shot.

JUST DO IT.





"Kid Chocolate" after second-round K.O., Apollo Gym, South Bronx, 1982.



Waiting to fight, Golden Gloves tournament, Madison Square Garden, 1982.

## FAT LIKE ME

A real round-up.

What's with all these fat rappers? Not that, mind you—we're talking poundage here. Back in the day, it was okay if Wonder Mike liked a little too much hot butter on his breakfast toast. The Fat Boys made their roundness a virtue in the dancehall, Admiral Bailey told all the youths in the community, "Just get some belly, men, and make some money." But the notion that big is beautiful seems to be changing.

Perhaps you've already noticed that the Overweight Lover, Heavy D, is slimming down. His label went so far as to issue a press release advising journalists not to dwell on Heavy's heaviness. Even the Fat Boys' Prince Markie Dee has shed a few pounds. What's next? Biz Markie and Suzanne Somers for Thighmaster? Fear not. Poised to fill these big shoes (and shorts) are a legion of roly-poly rhyesters with more than just a fat beat:

● **FAT JOE DA GANOSTA**

("I'm livin' fat, y'all.")

● **AKINYELE**

("I leave it up to Jene Fonda to take care of that physical-fit shit.")

● **BIGGY SMALLS**

("Since 13, a chubby nigga on the scene.")

● **BUR MELA-LOT**

(Good thing he likes big butts.)

● **BOO-YAA T.R.I.B.E.**

(Undisputed heavy-weight champions of Samee, if not the world.)

● **PUDDIE THA PHAT BASTARD**

("No record company came to me and said, 'You'll be Puddie Tha Phat Bastard.' I came to them the way I am.")



PHOTOGRAPH BY KRISTINE LARSEN

**SHOTS** The phone rings as I share Trinidad patties with French-born photographer Martine Barrat in her suite at New York's Chelsea Hotel. Snatches of her conversation filter through as I examine the shots in her new book, *Do Or Die... We Do, We Don't Die*, the fruit of ten years spent photographing in the boxing gyms of Harlem, Brooklyn, and the Bronx. Call concluded, she tells me that she had been speaking to a man named Alleycat. Of all the boxers it was he who had encouraged her work the most. Like so many of her old gang friends, Alleycat was calling from prison. "The book is about the forbidden world of men—f Forbidden to women," says Barrat, explaining the depth of her fascination with boxing. "I was accepted because I nev-

er acted like a seductive woman." As with most true works of art, *Do Or Die* (published this month by Viking with a forward by Martin Scorsese) transcends its subject; boxing becomes a metaphor for manhood, overcoming fear, fulfilling dreams, and the drive to survive. Barrat is drawn to the moments just before and after the fight; the book has only one photograph of a bout in progress. "It is enough," she says. In the eyes of the book's many young boys, vulnerability tussles with determination. "Everyone says it's cruel—but is it better for children to fight, or to die of malnutrition?" cries Barrat in her husky, world-weary voice. "I stayed because the children touched me. They had a goal; they were fighting for something." *Vivien Goldman*

## 411 BLACK LATIN

Felipe Luciano, ex-Last Poet, ex-chair of the activist Young Lords Party in the '70s, still bears the media drums for the unique status of black Latinos in this country. Not long ago, he interviewed Jose "El Canario" Alberto in New York's *El Diario* about what it was like to be one of the few matinee-idol singers in contemporary salsa to be dark-skinned. You wouldn't think the rainbow-completed Hispanic world would have the same problems with people of color as America's pop mainstream, but Luciano and Alberto know they do.

Light-skinned singers comprise the bulk of Latin label signings in the U.S., filling fanzines and Cuban-run television with images of fair-skinned homogeneity. Yet when I walk home through Manhattan's Washington Heights district, legions of dark-skinned youths chat in Spanish against a car-radio soundtrack of hip hop and reggae...putting the lie to the "white Spanish" mythology on which most Hollywood and Madison Avenue portraits of the Hispanic community are based. Sadly, black Latinos are rendered equally invisible when they choose to identify with African Americans. How many people know that Dres of Black Sheep, ex-Fat Boy Prince Markie Dee, and ex-C. C. rapper Freedom Williams are all black Larins? How many even want to know? But there are some very hip places to start looking for the low-down on all things Afro-Latin. *Descarga Newsletter* and its mail-order catalogue (for CDs, videos, and books) are among the most useful. 718-693-2966.



PHOTOGRAPH BY THOMAS LEEHAN

THE DAY WAS AGAIN COMING TO AN END ON THE BLOCK. WE GATHERED RITUALISTICALLY on the stoop to recap our adventures. Hopefully, one or two of them would someday come to be regarded as legends. Like the time L'il Papoose outran the police on his minibiike. They were in hot pursuit down our block, a one-way street across from Harlem's Dumber apartments, at high speed. Pap skidded into a screeching U-turn, making a beautiful escape—some of 'Evel Knievel's shit! Those were the types of adventures that passed our eye. If we were lucky, we'd enjoy the stories while sipping on a cold icy, scraped by our very own icy man. I always got black cherry, filled to the brim for a dime. Yeah man, those were the days.

Through all of our escapades there in the 'hood, the conversation would always get around to the subject of girls. Everybody had a flamboyant lie to prove how cool they were in 'gittin' some.' To hear them tell it, girls magically dropped their drawers at the slightest "Hey baby," or wink of an eye. Of course, while some of us were getting a little trim, most weren't. Girls our age were sweet on the older dudes, and the younger ones were, in most cases, our little sisters. I thought we were going to have to tell lies and continue rubbing our shit forever. Every once in a while, a wisecrack would be passed about someone fooling around with our block sissy, Poochie. That always caused a peculiar shift in the mood. When the conversation turned to Poochie, guys would quickly deny involvement in deep defense of their manhood.

Poochie was a quiet, light-skinned dude of medium build who always kept to himself. He'd been ribbed by the guys ever since I could remember for being different, for being a faggot. He never played ball with us or chased girls, and seemed only to go back and forth to the store for his mother, who fought a lot of his battles from her window. She would watch out for him, cursing at anyone who ridiculed the way he walked and talked. In the daylight, Poochie was always berated for being a sissy, but he would simply suck his teeth and wave it off with a flourish. After dark, though, it was a different story.

I heard many stories of what Poochie was made to do for different guys on the

block. If you were starving for a first time, he would help soften the strain of your wait, giving your hands a much-needed rest. He never seemed to hate the guys who used him as a feminine surrogate. There was always a sense that Poochie wanted it that way. I remember when a few of the guys I hung with were being called the "Odd Men," because they were supposedly screwing Poochie regularly. They would of course deny this, but always with a smirk on their faces. Their hands immediately grabbed their crotches in a show of strength. These stories were always fascinating, but most of the secrets were kept safe in the dark basements and hallways of Poochie's memories.

Poochie's own brother, Jimmy, hated him most of all. He saw Poochie predominantly as an embarrassment to his own developing manhood. Jimmy knew full well of the sexual exploits his homies played out with his brother when they couldn't get a fast girl. He seemed to approve of their brutal verbal and physical abuse, sometimes acting as though Poochie weren't a part of his family at all. As an ultimate insult, he renamed his brother "Sally." Perhaps he reasoned that it was all a fitting punishment for who Poochie was. Many times, Jimmy would become enraged and begin beating his brother, attempting to drive the gay demon from his soul. Poochie would fight back, not really understanding the situation, just protecting himself from the type of blows that would continue to fall on his head throughout his life.

## POOCHIE'S SECRETS

I didn't understand Poochie then, but I did take the time to observe him. Guys used to walk by his fourth-floor front window and give him some sort of sign that they wanted a little action. He would shyly nod back, sometimes with a smile, and then disappear from the window. His "visitor" would also disappear, either into

the building or the basement. Ten minutes later, like clockwork, the dude would return with a mean look on his face (the return of his manhood, I guess) and try to blend back into the block. Poochie would soon return to the window to wait with yet another secret about a supposed tough guy.

Poochie was gay at the absolute worst time, which is really always the same time—whenever people refuse to think about it as anything other than a sin or an abnormality. He was also destined to live this out in a place where problems abounded and people were exploited every day. No one had time to figure out fags. Most people denied their existence, or belittled them into shameful obscurity. I always felt sorry for Poochie because, for some reason, this never seemed like his fault. And even though he had grown up fighting tooth-and-nail just to exist, he never seemed to hold anyone's hatred against them. He might not have known exactly who he was, but he did know that many other "normal" folks didn't know quite who they were either. It still amazes me that all the guys who screwed Poochie (probably into his adult life) never felt like they were in any way "queer" themselves. I guess the thinking was that it's okay to get a blowski from a sissy every now and then just to relieve the tension. Your masculinity wasn't effected as long as you were in control. In other words: screw but don't get screwed.

Holding court once again on one of our tiny stoops, we sat just chillin', shootin' the shit, and passing judgment on everyone but ourselves. It was dark and Poochie walked past us on his way upstairs from yet another trip to the store for his mom. He was pushed around a bit and his ass got a few quick pinches. Mock kisses and crotch-grabs told of his rank here in this 'hood, but it was the glancing smiles, and all the other hidden signals, that told Poochie he would have the last laugh when it got just a bit darker.

Poochie died recently, in his early thirties, and so did a lot of his secrets about what it means—and doesn't mean—to be a man.

Marion Boykin

MY 'HOOD

**M**idway's NBA JAM is the biggest money-making game in arcade history. Gobbling as much as \$2,400 worth of quarters per machine each week, NBA JAM has spread through video emporiums and subway stations the world over. The game has exceptionally good graphics and controls, but the real lure is the licensing deal that Midway inked with the NBA. With all the big-name players to choose from, NBA JAM is not just a video adaptation of b-ball, it's a chance to imagine your-

the Turmell character better than the regular players? "What do you think?" answers Turmell.

Another trick: At the "Tonight's Match-Up" screen, hold down all the Player One and Player Two buttons—six total—and pull both joysticks down. Absurdly, Player One enters a 3-D tank battle game. Of the 13 secret players that had been discovered at press time, most belong to software designers and the street bailplayers who agreed to be filmed to help the designers perfect the graphics. When

and boast about high scores. They are sure that there are Playmates hidden in the game, but where? Testosterone-crazed boys even began calling *P*Playboy for clues, but to no avail. An undaunted Randolph Vance reported no success with "LO, L\_O, LOR, OLI, KK, KKH, K H K K KK... and a lot of others."

After months of costly searching, some began to wonder if Midway might be pulling everyone's leg about the Playmates at the end of the rainbow. But just suggest that it all might be a publicity hoax and indignant professions of faith pour through the e-mail: "Of course they're in there! How could they not be? We just need to get more organized about the code hunting!"

Nathaniel Wice

Nathaniel Wice

## JOE TO THE WORLD

**Not Joe Blow, not Joe Schmo**—just who is the average Joe?

**Joe Neckbone**  
**Principal Joe Clark**  
**Broadway Joe**  
**Joe Cocker**



**Joey Ramone**  
**Joe Cool**  
**Joe the Research Editor**  
**"Ode to Billie Joe"**  
**Jo Jo Starbuck**  
**Josephine Baker**  
**Joe Mantegna**  
**Joe Simmons (e.k.a. Run)**  
**Joe Strummer**  
**Joe Franklin**



self as the hoops star of your dreams. The fantasy gets better with dozens of exaggerated supermoves—players literally jump through the rafters, basketballs leave meteoric trails of flame behind them, helicopter rotor dunks are accompanied by a Marv Albertesque "Boom Shekalaka!"

It's not just a game—for some it's a full-time obsession. Arcade addicts use a worldwide computer network to exchange trick moves, which have been scattered throughout the game's software by its playful designers. Once discovered, the inside info spreads quickly across the computer network, known around Midway as "nerdnet." New messages unlocking the secrets of NBA JAM have appeared every day since last spring. For instance: Instead of punching in your own initials and birthdate at the beginning of the game, enter: MJT, March 22. Rether then resembling Shaquille O'Neal or one of the other 53 NBA players available, your on-court character will have the face and long hair of Mark Turnmill, the NBA JAM machine's head programmer. Is

Dominique Wilkins does a smoking cannonball slam, it's his head attached to the body of the lesser-known Chicago club bouncer and bailplayer Willie Morris Jr. (access code: WIL, Jan. 1).

Undoubtedly the most sought-after secret characters are the pair of salt-and-pepper cheerleaders who appear and flirt "Let's Play Two on Two" when the machine is in "attract mode" (you may not have seen this before, since NBA JAM machines rarely sit idle). JAM addicts have leaked enough information about these two to cause drooling on nerds: "They are Lorraine Olivia and Kerri Hoskins. Yes, these are the same two babes in the '90 issues of *Playboy*. Yes, the issues give out their birthdates, but no one knows what initials the two go by, so keep your ears open."

The kind of people who geek on computer networks, the kind who obsess over video games, the kind who fantasize about centerfolds—all intersect on "rec.games.video. arcade," the worldwide electronic clearinghouse for arcade players to share strategies

A L W A Y S

# phat



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# INVASION OF THE BOOTLEG SMASHERS

by Morales & Baker

Listen up, the figures are in!

The Recording Industry Association of America, a non-profit watchdog group working in the interest of 95% of the legit music business to combat record piracy and bootlegging, reports that while the number of bogus cassettes in the US have increased by 10% in the last year (to over 1.3 million!), there's also been a 47% rise in total arrests and indictments--as well as a 54% increase in guilty pleas and convictions!



The RIAA works closely with federal, state, and local law-enforcement agencies--all of which are primarily charged with protecting the sovereignty of American capitalists!

That makes YOU, the Rap Artist, a taxpaying businessman, finally and equally protected under the law!



Yet some of you out there, like our brothers in Onyx and Hoodrats, still feel the need to confront small-fry bootleg vendors on the street instead of letting The Man bustle his ass to do it for you!



In an effort to avoid a beat-down from somebody real, we're going to examine this needless compulsion to take the law into one's otherwise should-be-partying hands by talking to the fictional J. Paré, leader of the nonexistent group Rap Bastards--



S'up.

X, on your new album *Akinda* floor, you guys come out in favor of butchering the families of those--

Damn straight, stealin' out my pocket



But in your challenge to Stacey Koon ("Coon II Koon"), the senior police officer at the Rodney King beating, you take on the voice of Black L.A. and say, *No free niggas gonna buy it (riot!) / No free niggas stay quiet (riot!)...*



Yeah, that's pretty smooth.

So what's your point?

Well, what if during the Uprising homies broke into Tower Records and took your stuff?



Then they should die, too.

Even if you still get your royalty? Because the store has to make good to your distributor, regardless.



So it's "shoot brothers first, ask questions maybe." We just happen to have some raw footage from your new video "Bust Sum Heads," where you take a camera crew with you on the street--



Yo waitaminites!



There're you guys, going after Mr. Big...

You didn't even slow down to threaten the man! And see where you pushed that little girl?

Yo what girl, that bitch was at least 14!



Here's another question: In "Bootleg Bodybag" you sample not only from Onyx's "Bichasbootleguz," "Madonna's "Express Yourself," and 23 other songs; you're getting sued left and right--so what money are you protecting by beating up on vendors?



S'up with you, man? We heard you liked us--Max Ernst said we was dope!

Why, this is a Vibe review! Did you Jerox this? Don't you know you're supposed to buy as many copies of the magazine as you need? Why, this is very serious...



THE END?



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A black and white photograph of a man with dreadlocks playing a saxophone. He is wearing a white shirt and a patterned vest. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with trees. The text "Do what you love. The rest comes." is overlaid in the center.

Do what you love.  
The rest comes.

Take it easy.





Jean Norris and Renée Neufville

PHOTOGRAPH BY DANIEL TURNER STYLING BY STACEY CAMPBELL MAKEUP BY PAULINE LEWIS FOR WANTED DRESSES BY VERA WAZMAN

## SINGERS

YOU KNOW A SONG IS GOOD WHEN you start leaving your radio on all day long so you don't miss it. You know it's a hit when your Aunt Marty calls to find out the name of the single. But it only becomes a classic when, like Zhané's smooth "Hey Mr. D.J.," the beat moves you to push up out of your seat, raise your right arm in the air, bring it over your forehead, wag your tongue, gasp for air, and lean back and scream, "Aw yeah! That's my song!"

Who cares that you're the only one present for this jam? You're getting down with the teenage memory of the groove that had you slobbering down your partners on sweaty basement house-party dancefloors. "Heeee! Hooo! Ah-llite!"

It's those beautiful memories and that soulful music that get you amped, just like when princesses and hoods connect. That's Zhané's story. Two divas-in-training, Jamaican-born Jean Norris and Rhode Island native Renée Neufville became friends when they met at Temple University and later formed their singing duo, Zhané (pronounced Jan-ney)—a combination of their first names. Then they hooked up with Kay Gee, the Naughty by Nature deejay who became their producer.

Where Neufville brings in the gospel, Norris the jazz, and Kay Gee the hip hop, together they're creating a fusion of urban love songs. "Real mushy stuff..." (continued)

**Zhané are sisters with voices**

Neufville starts to say, then Norris continues, "... that deals with heartache, romance, passion, and sadness. We like to touch those sensitive feelings that folks generally keep hidden under the rug."

It's that deep emotion, the honesty in Zhané's music that pushed their debut, "Hey Mr. D.J.," to the top of the dance charts instantly. It's the groove we all can relate to. "When I first heard

the track, the thing that came to mind was the melodies," says Neufville, who is a classically trained pianist. "Then I started vibing on the block party and the words just flowed."

In the world of hip hop hype and attitude, Zhané is quiet and shy. They communicate with each other like twins, completing each other's sentences, eyeing one another before they respond,

and falling silent when one leaves the room. Sometimes they harmonize with a favorite song on the radio as if nobody else is around. And while everybody else is singing along to "Hey Mr. D.J." in discos and on the freeways, Norris and Neufville seem almost unaware that the song is a hit.

Zhané is just getting started. They're already working on several new tracks

with Kay Gee for an album due out early next year. For now, though, they're still basking in the glow of an overnight explosion and keeping egos on the down low. At a photo shoot a stylist referred to them as divas. While Norris closed her eyes and blushed, Neufville replied, "Did you hear what he called us? Divas."

Loud and clear.

# NEXT

Get Ready, Get Set for the classical influence of acid jazz

"PEOPLE BELIEVE THAT THE ONLY THING IN THE PROJECTS ARE 16-YEAR-olds with guns," says Mark Batson, 24, coleader of the brotherly piano duo Get Set V.O.P. "But there are grandmothers, mailmen, and families living in the projects. There is as much love in the ghetto as there are other elements."

Scott and Mark Batson

Raised in Brooklyn's notorious Bushwick Projects, Mark ("Infinite Kundaalini") and Scott ("Kwabena the Triumphant") Batson aren't trying to romanticize the landscapes where bullets fly and old ladies cry, they merely want the listener to know there is another side. As older brother Scott, 25, says, "In order to be accepted in da' hood, we both had to learn how to fight. Sometimes we had to carry guns to school but on the other hand we both had our music."

Interrupting the flow with his crazy laugh, Mark says, "I can remember times when our homeboys would just sit in the stairway puffing weed, gulping beer, and listening to us play Chopin and Beethoven. Talk about brothers *buggin' out*."

After graduating from Brooklyn Technical High School, both brothers trooped down to Washington, D.C., to attend Howard University, where Mark became an artist-in-residence at the Smithsonian Institute. There he plucked his piano fingers through the works of Duke Ellington for one of the museum's seasonal tributes. "Although I worked on that Duke Ellington project, the jazz community still didn't embrace me," he says. "There's a communication gap when it comes to jazz because there's so many purists who don't want anyone messing with their music."

During that same time the brothers became close friends with one of their teachers, piano virtuoso Geri Allen. Last year in New York City the trio teamed up to perform interpretations of Jimi Hendrix, which were recorded, and a deal for their release is pending.

(continued)

## MUSICIANS







**YOU WOULD BE PERFECTLY  
HAPPY WITHOUT THESE JEANS.**





## Bertice Berry is the hostess with the mostest

CHICAGO-BASED BERTICE BERRY PREFERS THE SIMPLICITY of quiet clothes with a tinge of funk. Besides, "My hair is a huge accessory and the locks are already scarin' folks," says Berry, the dreadlocked, doctorate-wielding, ex-sociology professor, comedian turned syndicated talk-show host.

The network execs at *The Bertice Berry Show* were a little leery about her cultivated mane of knots. "They were afraid of the gatekeepers," she says. "They asked me if I could change it. I told them, 'Yeah, I can cut it off.'" The thought of a clean-shaven, quick-tongued black woman serving Berry's particular brand of girlfriend flavor must have put the fear of Jesus in them. The bigwigs met again and told her, "We think you should keep it the way it is."

All visuals aside, Berry hopes to distinguish herself from the slew of other daytime droners by developing

a show that goes beyond infotainment. Although the format focuses on self-help, Berry doesn't want to get all new age about it. "Healing to me connotes some sort of psychotherapy and we don't have that kind of time," she explains. "I'm more about, here's the problem, here's how to fix it, and let's move on."

Daytime television via the academy may seem like a strange career path, but as 32-year-old Berry will tell you, some funny things can happen on the way from the projects. She cultivated her trademark wit as a teenager struggling to control her anger over poverty and racism. "Nobody would have described me as a funny little girl," she says. "I was a very sad, serious child—one of those deep kids."

Luckily, like something out of an after-school special, Berry got to go to college with the help of a mysterious white millionaire who was looking to play god-

With a catalogue of more than 200 songs ("We tried to mix our favorites for our own album," says Scott), the Batsons want to start creating funky sounds for other artists. They've already worked with former Soul II Soul songstress Caron Wheeler and Arrested Development.

Recorded in only 10 days, the Batsons' debut album, *Voice of the Projects*, creates a newer school of acid jazz, combining bebop and ragtime,

big band and Superfly funk, acoustic piano and electric keyboards, old-school rap and '70s black pop. "We played every-

thing on this record, except for the drums. That was done by our man Catfish," Mark says. "Like homeboy from Onyx says, we try to put our hearts into each of our tracks."

Rubbing his tired eyes, Scott says, "On *Voice of the Projects* we wanted to make music that is real, like Sun Ra, Eric B. & Rakim, Duke Ellington, and Beethoven. And if nobody likes it, at least we got a funky tape that we can play for ourselves." *Michael A. Gonzales*

# NEXT

TALK SHOW HOST

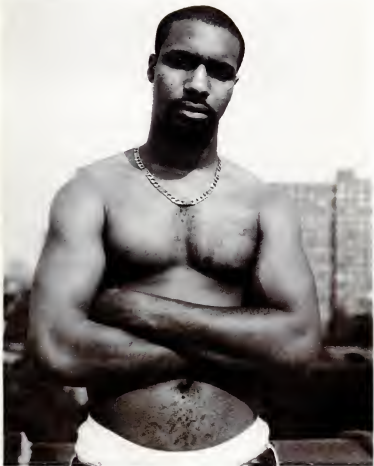
father to a "young black person who could sink or swim." When she finally met the benefactor, Terry Evenson, at her graduation, his present was graduate school. Ironically, when Evenson bucked up on hard times (the recession coupled with some bad real estate deals), Berry returned the favor—she now employs him as her business manager.

Later, when Berry became a professor at Kent State, she found that humor kept her students interested and took the edge off less palatable issues like "isms" and phobias. One day a comedian observed her class and encouraged Berry to try stand-up. She did, with reservation. Many of her colleagues didn't agree. "They actually had the nerve to say to me that it was an affront that I would be doing stand-up comedy," she says. "But my students helped me see that I could be funny and smart at the same time." *Joan Morgan*



BUT  
YOU'D  
BE  
NAKED.

## Chris Latimer's homeboy shopping network



FASHION FORECASTER

HEY!!! HOOO! EXECUTIVE'S IN THE HOUSE! Call him a hip-hop fashion broker, call him an apparel A&R man. Whatever you call him, Chris Latimer, the 25-year-old president of Da Streetz, is *literally* a trendsetter. Product placement is what they call it in more formal circles, but Latimer's chores start and end way out of the parameters of anyone's definitions.

"Yeah, I promote fashion, I do product placement. But that's been happening for a while," says Latimer while cruising over the Brooklyn Bridge in his Pathfinder, his brand-new cellular phone purring with a call. "I believe in orchestrating a vibe."

Like SWV sporting CCM hockey shirts in their "Downtown" video. Or LL Cool J moving the crowd at the presidential inauguration, decked out in his AACA finest. That's Latimer's job, placing garments on the artists who influence fashion and define the culture. "Basically, I pair the artist up with dope clothes, which sends out a message to the fans who buy records," he says. "It's almost an unwritten endorsement deal."

As Fashion Avenue continues its copycat assault on street fashion, Latimer trusts his instincts and assaults right back. Sportswear manufacturers think they can send any clothing sample to any rapper and hope that the kids follow the leader. As someone who grew up with hip-hop music, Latimer goes by his own "personal pulse." A lot of these companies "deal in blind placement.

They don't know the flavor. They don't feel the fashion," says the style-conscious White Plains native.

It was one of these unfeeling attempts that led Latimer to this vocation. He heard from a friend that the AACA had sent samples of their up-and-coming line of black college sweatshirts to a video company with hopes of getting the stuff on Boyz II Men. "But that wasn't their flavor," Latimer says.

It was his, however. "This was an opportunity," he says. "I told AACA to give me two weeks to show them what I could do. I was basically overselling myself." In that time, he got placements on *YO! MTV Raps* and in a *ShowBiz* and *A.G.* video. And a job was born. After stints with a record company and as a party promoter, Latimer had a new career and the AACA had a huge year. "I'm not trying to get a merit badge or anything, but we set shit off," says Latimer, the former Howard University student. "We set off an explosion in black college awareness."

As Da Streetz grows, Latimer looks to build an all-encompassing marketing/advertising firm specializing in ghetto-savvy, street-legal accoutrements of hip-hop fashion. But Latimer knows when a sham is a sham, and there are products he wouldn't even think about marketing. "I don't want to sell rap artists short," he says. "They have power and should know about their power. Period."

Scott Paulson-Bryant

## Made in the Shadz of Lingo

## RAPPERS

FLAVOR. MANY RAPPERS CLAIM TO HAVE IT BUT FEW ARE ABLE TO SCOOP IT UP AND DISH IT OUT to the masses. Rap trio Shadz of Lingo—MCs Lingo and Kolorado and DJ Rocco—got a mouthful of flavor and just the right sprinkle of old-school-meets-new-school attitude and sound. Typical of the journeyman life of rap, the group have spent the last eight years digging for the sounds and a deal to call their own. The result: a panoply of hip-hop, jazz, and reggae-filtered tracks and a record contract via their affiliation with superproducer Dallas Austin.

Natives of Richmond, Virginia—the first hip-hop breeding ground—the twentysomething trio met in middle school and began doing voiceovers for commercials and production for other groups. By 1991 Shadz grew tired of being a local rap act and moved to Atlanta—the new black-music mecca thanks to L.A. Reid and Babyface. Their second day in town Shadz met Kevin Wales, manager of the teenyboppers ABC. Wales liked the group's material and eventually became their manager. He also introduced them to Austin, who promised Shadz a hotcup once his production deal went through with EMI. Meanwhile, Shadz's dues-paying period lagged on and on and on.

"Get a job!" was the scream from their families. And work they did. "It was rough," says the tanky Kolorado, but the group's determination is evident in their debut album, *A View to a Kill*—a grab bag of urban black music. Unlike some rap groups



who embrace a singular music style, Shadz defies categorization and has mass appeal. "A lot of groups come out with titles and fake concepts," says the soft-spoken Rocco. "We just average niggas so we come out with the real flavor."

That real flavor is seasoned with the production skills of Austin, Erick Sermon (formerly of EPMD), Diamond D, and Solid Production. But Shadz of Lingo is quick to remember their small-town roots and eagerly offer advice to rappers outside of the South Bronx-South Central Axis. Kolorado says, matter-of-factly, "Don't let nobody tell you your stuff is weak."

Kevin Powell

MCs Kolorado and Lingo and DJ Rocco



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**Dennis Carter**

**He gave up a  
bad set of wheels for a minivan.**

**He gave up his  
bid whist night for the P.T.A.**

**He gave up jazz clubs  
for bedtime stories  
and R for PG.**

**But he wouldn't  
give up his sneakers  
for anything.**



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*Looking like an  
atomic dandy, George  
Clinton dons Yohji  
Yamamoto with a Henry  
Dunant cloak.*

**I**t's in the air. Suddenly, funk is everywhere you turn. Rappers sample it, rockers like Primus and the Red Hot Chili Peppers invoke its muse. Several major record labels have funk reissue series in effect. Afros and platforms proudly walk the streets once again.

And, as always, at the center of it all is George Clinton, the Maggot Overlord himself, ruler of the Parliament-Funkadelic army for close to 30 years now. Check the climax of Dr. Dre's "Let Me Ride" video. Where's everybody going? To a P-Funk concert, of course, and even Dre (who has spearheaded the resurgent Clinton madness) knows enough to disappear from his own clip and clear the way for some mind-blowing footage from the Mothership Connection tour—The Bomb exploding all over your MTV.

Clinton's time has come again. After more than a decade out of print, four classic Funkadelic albums are due out any minute on Priority Records. *Tear the Roof Off*, a near-definitive 2-CD collection, recently put Parliament back on the R&B charts. The

## BROTHER FROM ANOTHER PLANET

*George Clinton freed our minds. If only our asses would follow.* Interview by Vernon Reid.

long-dormant Funkadelic—including Bootsy Collins, Bernie Worrell (who's also the newest addition to David Letterman's band), and who knows who else, the ones who first melded metal guitars, soul rhythms, and doo-wop harmonies—are in the process of signing to Dallas Austin's Rowdy Records and planning a "Mothership Reconnection" tour for next year. And, best of all, Clinton's first major-label album in three years, titled *Hey Man... Smell My Finger*, is a glorious return to form, a reminder to all these new jack funksters that there is only one true master.

Vernon Reid (guitarist for Living Colour and a founder of the Black Rock Coalition) recently sat with the Funkadelic Relic for a long dinner in a Manhattan restaurant where the other diners' major concern was whether Clinton's hair—truly the stuff of legend—was real or not. The conversation that ensued sprawled over subjects from love, crime, drugs, and conspiracy theories to the meaning of funk and the history of the *real* Clinton Administration.

*My first concert experience was seeing Funkadelic in 1973 at Madison Square Garden. And it seemed like I was witnessing some sort of ritual. It was very powerful. What was it like to actually be onstage in the middle of all of that? It was very, very disciplined, but very loose and chaotic at the same time.*

Yeah, consciously that was our intention, to do chaos and order at the same time. We came from Motown. I always knew that I had been trained as a producer and a writer and there wasn't nothing else like the discipline they had at Motown. Having done that, then we saw Cream and Vanilla Fudge and all them take the music that my mother liked, flip it around and make it loud and it became cool. We realized that blues was the key to that music. We just speeded blues up and called

*Photographs by Christian Witkin*

it "funk" 'cause we knew it was a bad word to a lot of people.

See, I do hair. So cool to me ain't nothing but a style. You may be cool with this style in this city, go 50 miles to another city and be cornered than a motherfucker with your dress, your clothes, your music, and everything else. So I never worry about what's cool; I believed a long time ago that even Flagg Bros. Shoes was cool somewhere. Over here you could get your ass kicked for wearing them, but some place they were cool to somebody.

*How did funk come into being?*

Our show was basically R&B and we got happy and became, you know, like churchy. Still trying to keep our shirts and things but playing like we were gonna be hippies. And once we experienced what you could do to people just jumping around from soul to blues parts of our songs, we realized that nobody could even be our competition and we didn't have to worry about doing it fast—everybody in the band would tell you that I said it's gonna take 15 years for this to work, but we'll have a job.

Once we realized that it was hip to be a bum, we were the only ones doing it. And it was that way for a long time. Everything was so loose on Funkadelic and so sloppy that when you hear the records in the right order, it confuses you. Did they accidentally do that right? Or did they accidentally do that wrong? But it was no accident.

*You broke convention in so many ways.*

I did it on purpose once I realized the first album worked. We broke all the rules intentionally, and there were enough people who liked it. There were enough hardcore fans that I liked me in Boston, Detroit, Toronto, Cleveland, and in all the colleges. And then the hippies and rock, that whole era to me ended with Woodstock. Most people think that's where it began.

*Because that's when it turned into an industry?*

Yeah. Instead of sharing a tab or sharing a joint, it became "I want to buy." That whole era changed in no time. After that, if you were a hippie you was a Jesus freak. And the danger of that was Charles Manson—people who really didn't want to let go, who really loved the idea of death. They were getting really dangerous. All of a sudden people were just junkies, and all the hard hats would come up and beat up the hippies.

*On records like "America Eats Its Young" you were dealing with those kinds of situations.*

N. W. A., Ice Cube, and all of them say it now, but I said it in a way that I tried not to blame nobody for feeling like they feel 'cause you're hip to be that way. You're hip to feel that way. But it had to be said that if you don't like the effects, don't produce the cause.

*My introduction to your music was the record "Comic Strip." My best friend in school at the time—he's selling insurance now—he turned me on to this record and the thing about "Comic Strip" is the compassion; you are talking about a mother who is a prostitute trying to shield her*

*children. In her nightly prayers, she prays for forgiveness. She yells, "Don't judge me too strong." You've always shown a tremendous amount of love and compassion for people who would normally be outcast in society and be called out by name.*

Like they deserve whatever they get.

*Even in your strongest protest songs, there was still a sense of aspiration, of striving for transcendence. It was never just about the negativity.*

See, you're a damn fool if you see somebody starving and poor and you think that they should just stay starving and poor and not take care of them. Whether you're really starving or not, if you believe you're



starving, you're starving. And if I got some little bit of money and I ain't making sure that you got some. I'm a damn fool if I don't expect you to come and try to take it. It's not as easy as each person is responsible for being in their predicament.

*Oh yeah. "Pull yourself up by your own bootstraps."*

Conditions of society dictate everything. Poverty breeds privilege, straight out. So if you're just enjoying the profits of it and worrying about somebody taking it—you are responsible too. It ain't got nothing to do with goody-goody; it's self-protection.

*When you listen to a lot of the younger brothers today, especially people doing gangsta rap, they say that they're reflecting reality. And there are times when I hear this and I think to myself, do these people really think that they are the only black people who've had to face hard times? Now, times are hard, harsh, rough, brutal, but you have to think about what a brother such as yourself experienced when you were young.*

The difference is we always experienced those things, but now the media and everybody else tells you about your experience of it. Yeah, they're reflecting the streets, but they get a lot of help. The radio stations will play that. The record companies will buy that. The kids are just trying to make some money. Now if that's what makes the money and if that's what the media is asking for, then everybody will do it and make that.

*Now, I'm not nostalgic for the '70s, really, but I came up as part of that era. I was listening to your music, to Hendrix, to Sly Stone, to James Brown. And while that was going on there was a real sense of community. Those bands were doing commercial music, having hit records, but there was always a sense of...*

Something that's ours.

*Something, yeah, I mean—soul. A general sense of love your brother. We've always had gangsters, we've had pimps, and we've had criminals, but there's something different now.*

It was flashy then. Even pimps. Being a pimp was more of a showbiz thing, just like somebody getting a barbershop and telling lies about "my babe's got this amount of money" and "my babe's got that amount of money." These were the ways to bring the money into the barbershop.

When rap came along, it was basically a news service with messages starting right out telling you what was going on in the streets. And dissin' 'the Sucker MC. See, the Sucker MC was a fictitious character so you could beat the shit out of him. Women and pimping has always been a part of our jokes. You know, even in blues, playing and drinking and hustling.

But then rap starts talking about politics, which is very good at. Hip hop got an Islamic influence, a certain amount of Five Percenters, and they have customs that come from another culture. We may not want to treat our women like that, but what's disrespectful here may not be like that in the Arab world. Where you get in trouble is when you get the two of them mixed up together when you are about 15 years old—a mixture of the Five Percent philosophy and that "Bitch, Ho" mentality, which is basically just fun and games if it were by itself. If it were by itself, it would be just somebody stylin', hustling and showing off. But when you add the Five Percenters, you think you've got a legitimate reason to hate, to dis these women because they are supposed to stay behind.

*I want to jump from this and talk about the funk, about the music. I always wondered what it was like to be in the studio with Parliament or Funkadelic cutting a record. Like, what was it like when you'll all go "Flash Light"?*

By the time we cut "Flash Light," it was just like a factory. Y'all come in and do something. You three come in and do something. First of all, the track was Bootsy's track. He didn't want it. He couldn't hear it so I took it. By then we already had done the Motown thing, harmony, scat, so with "Flash Light" I wanted to make a song like a Michael Jackson song.

# IF THE BAND PLAYED ANYTHING FOR TWO MINUTES, I'D MAKE A RECORD

And then I always deviate from a love song just before I finish it. I try to make the love not just one-on-one, but love for all of us. Not to be goody-goody, but I think love songs get cheap. I hate songs like "we will die together." Those songs are too easy to pimp.

But "Flash Light" was really about how many voices—there was like 50 voices on that one song. Okay, y'all 3, 5, 10, or whatever sing five tracks. Then a whole other section would sing it. And then we started getting particular about it. First it was just the jam. Give me a crowd like you're at the baseball field. Then, okay, let's see how precise we could get that. Bernie [Worrell] taught me about motifs. You get a melody, you have every motherfucker playing it—everybody did that in "Flash Light."

*Running a theme through...*

Yeah, like a movie. You get fast, you get slow. You play it on another instrument.

*I love that chant in "Flash Light," 'cause it makes me think of something from opera that just showed up.*

It's a Jewish Bar Mitzvah chant of a friend of mine. "Da da da dee da da da." There was a whole lot more to it. I just took that part out of it 'cause it was a long thing.

*You just took out the funky part.*

Aaron Myron, he went to my grade school. I never forgot it. I just played it over and over, but then you add "You turn me on." All of that was just theme on top of theme so everything kept coming around.

*What about something like "Maggot Brain"?*

"Maggot Brain" meant how the fuck can we straighten up something if the tool that we have to use is rotten? The tool we are gonna use to straighten shit up is our brain. If that's already rotten, you startin' off fucked up. Once you admit that that's gonna kill you, you can begin to change some.

See, even when I was using drugs, I always made music so important in my life that nobody would ever be able to say,

"That nigger did that only because he's on dope." But paranoia is your high with crack. It's the same as driving fast, climbing a mountain, doing all those things that scare the shit out of you. My high then was I was gonna fuck up my career—all that I've done and people would be telling the truth if I fuck it up right now.

I don't regret having done it. It was the motherfucker's education that I needed. Nothing happens for nothing. I know everything, 'cause I thought I knew everything. I done had coke all my life. Somebody gave me a base pipe and I took one hit—it was so unbelievable, I called everybody that I trusted right then. Said, "I don't know what the fuck this was, but I will be doing it again and anything that is this good I know that I owe some more besides that hundred dollars I paid for it."

*How were you able to pull back and get out of it?*

"Atomic Dog." "Atomic Dog." "Atomic Dog." Once I realized that I had a hit and we've got to gon

the road, I was so paranoid of fucking up. 'Cause I knew everybody was saying already we spent all this money on dope. In the '60s, we did acid to death, but I ain't never been able to do coke without shaking. I did freebasing and I always had a joint in my pocket everywhere I went. But when it came time for that motherfucker "Atomic Dog" to come out, I was so afraid of fucking up. Paranoia is the high, you just have to know that.

Then I moved south of Detroit—80 miles into the country so it would be a hassle to get back into town. And I was lucky because it worked. After about three or four months of running back and forth to town,



you get halfway there and the urge wore off. 'Cause it may not be there. You know you got enough for a gram, but it'll be gone before you get back, so you got one hit when you get back. I was so glad to see that I could say, I'll wait until tomorrow.

*What do you think the cost of drug use has been to Sly?*

He's OK now. He ain't doing it now. But he done did two or three sets of drugs like that. I never could understand anybody liking Angel Dust, but he did that and cleaned up. Then when crack came in, he did that way past most of the people I know that did it. Then all of a sudden he just stopped it. There will be another one, though. There will always be something.

*As a guitarist, Eddie Hazel's playing on "Maggot Brain" was really important for me. Just recently Eddie passed away. How did you feel about his passing?*

We had worried about Eddie so long, we just didn't know what to do anymore. He was sick, said he was sick for so long.

*I played with him—jammed with him a few months before he passed.*

And he was talking about it then—that he was gonna die.

*He played really well. He played great. But he just seemed really distracted. He seemed like he was somewhere else.*

But he was like that all the time. He was so emotional he sang and made himself cry. He was so sensitive that consequently he rarely sang a whole song because he would get too emotional. Once I got older I couldn't talk him out of it. When I was younger we all stayed together. Whatever it took to cut a record. But after a while I got tired, you know.

Just give me two minutes and I'll make a record of it. You play anything for two minutes and I'll make a record. Because somebody in the band is gonna nod off before the shit is over anyway.

*One thing about P-Funk is the whole sense of community. Having fun is the bottom line, but it's not just having fun. Like "Chocolate City," that's one of those records that meant so much in the 'hood, where I grew up in Brooklyn.*

But you also heard about the Vanilla Suburb in the same record.

*You included everybody.*

If some aliens came from another planet, we are human beings. We are human beings whether we like it or not. But we still depict ourselves as black because certain people look at us that way and they'll piss you off and make you have to protect yourself because somebody is pulling the strings to make gays and straights fight, blacks and whites fight, the abortion fight. To me the best way is to get out of those kinds of things. If I catch myself hating a white motherfucker, I'm wrong. One motherfucker ain't got no business hating another.

*There's always been that universal, "One Nation Under A Groove" thing in your music. What do you think of the more Afrocentric, more separatist philosophies?*

They have to say it. Everybody has a different degree of tolerance; it's like Martin Luther King and Malcolm X. Malcolm said, "I hope you do it Martin's way. I hope we don't have to do it my way." That's when I knew Malcolm before he went to Mecca, 'cause I watched him on the box up in Harlem long before he became Malcolm.

*That's interesting; my father recently told me that he saw Malcolm X speak.*

He sat up on the box every day. He sat on the box up there across from the Apollo like those guys you just think are crazy today—he did that every day and you had to listen to him to know he was cool.

But when the shit is right, everybody agrees with it. Ain't no different than what I would want or what, say, Ice Cube would want, just the way he says it. People are just plain pissed and can't take it no more. Most of them just try to make records. But you can't take the brother's anger away 'cause that's fear. If he could not rap then he might kill you. When you find

OF IT, BECAUSE AFTER THAT THEY WERE JUST GOING TO NOD OFF ANYWAY.



out about it it may be too late.

*Picking up on that, the P-Funk mob grew to be a huge extended family with Parliament and the Brides and the Horny Horns...*

The older Parliament just came back with us. Grady [Thomas] and Fuzzy [Haskins—the two of whom split off and recorded as Funkadelic in 1981] will be back too. Fuzzy will be back as soon as he finishes his Jane Fonda workout tape. He weighs 300 pounds now.

Yo Yo, Dre, Cube need to be fired. When I heard him say that, I'll do anything you want.

*I really like the Prince cuts. What's it like for you working with Prince because you influenced him so much?*

Exc's him. You can play the funkier shit, he just nods his head—like he just expects it.

*You don't think he was excited working with you?*

He's like me, I get excited too. But I do it in the bathroom. Flush the toilet and come out and pretend

as nostalgia, so it wasn't no big surprise to me. I had planned to be here to keep it from being like Chuck Berry and Little Richard and be more like Jimi Hendrix. So it wasn't like I wasn't gonna be here.

*Do you regret anything?*

Yo, fuck no. That's a waste of fucking time. If I have a fight with my wife, I say that all the shit that we said, we better put in a song so at least it pays for itself. [Laughing] You can't stop yourself from arguing. But you ain't got to mean that shit either. My

## I PLANNED TO BE HERE WHEN FUNK CAME BACK AS NOSTALGIA, SO IT AIN'T

*Well, that's great because all the groups were working and everything, and all of a sudden it seemed like everything kind of fell apart.*

You know how it gets, everybody wants a little bit more money. We've been close since we were 14 years old. It ain't like I didn't understand what they were doing. Managers and people are telling them that they can get a little more, so they had to try.

But I never sued them about it. I didn't sue them for using Funkadelic. Everybody tried to get me to sue them. I didn't fight [drummer] Jerome Brailey for the *Mutiny on the Motherhip* record, even though that was a title of mine.

See, everybody is Funkadelic. The audience is Funkadelic. There's somebody in D.C. who copyrighted the name Funkadelic. We never stopped using it so he had to stop, but he tried it. And he wants to sell it back to me for a dollar if I introduce him to Prince.

*You're saying that somebody went and copyrighted...*

Copyrighted the name.

*Who never played with the band or nothing?*

Just like samples. It's an extension of sampling. Some people like to sample part of it. Some people like to dress up like us. Some people just go out and actually start writing the name and saying, "I'm Funkadelic." Billy Bass played with me. Eddie played with him for a minute. And I didn't raise no hell about it. Because it ain't nobody's fight. So the reason why I went back on the road is if I get visible you can't do that shit.

*We're gathered today to celebrate a new George Clinton record. How do you like your new record? How do you feel about it?*

I really like it. I was made to wait four years to get this record out.

*What was that all about?*

Ain't no real record people in the business no more. Ain't none—and no black folks—so soon as somebody else say, "Well I don't know," then they can't know, either. I wasn't about to put another record on the album or cut nothing out. Kerry Gordy came in, Berry Gordy's son, to work on the record. I even babysat the dude. I told him I could get Ice Cube, Dr. Dre, Yo Yo, I could get all of them on a record. I wasn't about to cut no "Paint the White House Black." I thought that was the corniest title 'cause we already did "Chocolate City." I didn't want to do that shit no more, but Cube and them, they can say that shit and it ain't so old. So he went straight back and said to the label that anybody who can't get a hit record with

it didn't bother them.

*So tell me, has Prince told you how to pronounce that symbol?*

I told him—hermaphrodite. That's what it is. Both sex objects is a hermaphrodite. I know two of them personally.

*How well?*

When I grew up, I knew one guy. He got a job in a carnival. You're born with it—with both sex organs and one of them don't work. A lot of animals are born like that. But one of them don't work. You can't fuck yourself [laughter]. You can't do that. No, see, Prince thought he was really being slick when he said that and that's all it is. Promotion.

But I told him and everybody, when it came to the title I'm not changing that, because I've been promoting an album titled *Hey Man...Smell My Finger* too long and the fans pay attention.

*The only band that people follow the way they do P-Funk is the Grateful Dead.*

We got a lot of Grateful Dead people coming to our shows now. People want to believe that somebody stayed together and lived.

*It's devotion. To you as the Maggot Overlord, but also to Bernie and everybody.*

Bootsy, Garry [Shider], Mudbone [Cooper], some people don't do nothing but just be there. Calvin and Grady. I know goddamn well they did not expect to be here. I just come out of the clear blue. "Why don't you get your ass on back over here?" It's time.

*And you'll get them all back out?*

Fucking right. One thing we never did was fire somebody. Everybody always left and come back on their own. Sometimes they come back and we ain't got no room playing guitar so they'd end up playing bass, but they did come back.

You know, when Calvin and them left I understood. I told them I was gonna buy a spaceship—they thought we should buy cars and houses. I said, I swear to God a spaceship will take you farther than that car will. They got a little Seville and because I wouldn't buy a house and a Seville they figured they had to break off and thought they weren't close to me after a while. They sued me. They lost and we stayed friends at the end. Most people, I think, would not even be able to speak. I never let it get to that.

*What price do you pay for being in the center of this twisting thing? What kind of toll has it taken?*

I get off on the funk, to tell the truth. Don't tell me I can't do that. 'Cause I know how joyful it is. I had planned to be here when the shit came back in

thang is, I'll be alright by Thursday. I've always said that. You're gonna rerun that picture, run that mother over and over in your mind until probably you forget it. And then you ask yourself, why the fuck did I worry and hurt so long about this shit because eventually I was gonna get over it.

So don't read me wrong, sure I regret. If you just gave somebody some pussy I might put for three, four, five hours. But I ain't leaving and we'll be alright eventually so ain't no sense in me goin' around about "you dirty bitch." I do understand and mothers that can't look at it like that. You know, I understand that. I ain't gonna tell you 'cause I don't know, but Thursday will be here and your monkey ass will be forgotten.

*What's the funniest thing that ever happened at a Funkadelic concert?*

I used to get naked all the time and run around onstage. My main fear was if the electric cut off and the music stopped while I was out there. I mean, if the music stopped, lights come on, you got to get up naked than a motherfucker. I always worried about that. And finally when that motherfucker happened, I hit the floor and was crawling through people's legs back naked trying to get backstage. The people laughed like hell and the band laughed 'cause I had nothing to put on. Finally I just got up and walked. As long as the music is going you're cool. You're cool as a motherfucker, but when the music stops and you're out there back naked and the lights are on—get your naked ass out of here.

*I remember they used to advertise the shows, "George Clinton promises to keep his clothes on. Come out please. Earth, Wind & Fire, Funkadelic, and George promises to keep his clothes on."*

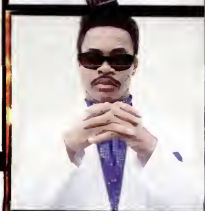
The last time I did that was out of the spaceship in D.C. I was back naked and up to one step and my shit was standing right up. They caught it sticking straight up. I left well enough alone. My mother said, "Boy, you point that chitlin' at somebody else—you never take your clothes off." Sly said, "Don't learn no better man. If you knew better you wouldn't do that shit."

But, man, fuck the hassle. It's a charge to some people—"Woe is me, woe is me." Fuck me. Now I've got room to do something. As long as I got "woe is me" in my head, I ain't got no room for nothing else. See, love is unconditional. It ain't, "If you do this, I'll do that." That ain't no love. When you love something, you'll love it whether it's there, gone, or whether it loves you. Not to say I'm not gonna be pissed for an hour or two, but, you know, only until Thursday. ■



NO SURPRISE TO ME.

*Funkin' fashion is the result when Clinton sports a Giorgio Armani suit, Cross Colours T-shirt and Dolce & Gabbana scarf, Vernon Reid gets cosmic chic in Henry Dumaré cape and pants.*



## FUNK MASTERS

PHOTOGRAPHS BY  
BARRON CLAIBORNE

Funk was more than just James, Sly, and George. Funk was a style, an era, a way of life. And if the bands that followed in the wake of that holy trinity were not quite visionaries of the same magnitude, they were the ones who solidified the genre on the charts and in our hearts.

Black music of the early '70s was an extraordinary pop moment; songs like War's "Slipin' Into Darkness" or "Who's Gonna Take the Weight, Pt. 1&2" by Kool and the Gang were edgy, angry, deep—and were also big radio hits. They provided the link between the emerging R&B politics of Marvin Gaye, Stevie Wonder, and Curtis Mayfield and the groove-is-everything approach of disco looming just over the horizon.

It's no wonder that rappers such as EPMD and Ice Cube, striving for that perfect mind-body fusion, have built careers out of fragments from these fathers of funk (as well as the post-disco wave they inspired—dance-floor favorites like Zapp and Cameo). The draws, the bass lines, the hairdos of these funky maestros will rule as long as party people want to shake their rumps.

*Alan Light*

FROM LEFT:

LARRY BLACKMON (CAMEO)

LEE OSKAR (WAR)

LARRY GRANAN

(ORANM CENTRAL STATION)

ROGER TRAUTMAN (EAPP)

LEROY "BUDAFOOT" BONNER

(OHIO PLAYERS)

BOOTEY COLLINS

(BOOTEY'S RUBBER BAND)

KOOL BELL (KOOL AND THE GANG)



PHOTOGRAPHS BY BOOTEY COLLINS BY MICHAEL LAVIN/OUTLINE PHOTOS





# BETTER DAYS

*The eternal rise (and fall) of Chaka Khan, R&B's funkied-up princess.* By Hilton Als.

Photographs by Alastair Thain

**A**lright, Chaka, you gorgeous 40-year-old recording star, our star of stars, with your flat, freckled, not to say triangular nose (powdered) and small firm handshake (nails: red) and like kooky Elsa Lanchester in *The Bride of Frankenstein* grin and that mane of (what color is it?) hair that keeps shifting back from your face, exposing its seam, which circles your circular face as so many hair pieces and wigs have done before; Chaka, you gorgeous kid you, eat your food.

Chaka's in London not eating, even though this is her favorite or, like, "one of my favorite" Indian restaurants, located near her home somewhere in London, which is not so jolly, given that it is, after all, London, and grey and sprawling, so Charles *Black House* Dickens it is depressing, so much so, in fact, that I want to escape, right into tiny (3'2") Chaka Khan's arms if Chaka Khan, Chaka Khan, would have me. Which she isn't.

"I probably like London for all the reasons you don't," says Chaka Khan on the walk from her home—it's in a mews—to, like, one of her favorite Indian

restaurants. The sun is setting over the mews. The sun is setting around Chaka Khan's hair. What color is it?

"I like London because..." says Chaka, trailing off not into another sentence but a gesture: adjusting her large black sunglasses against the setting sun, large black glasses flecked with face powder.

"I like London because..." says Chaka, tossing her smoked-to-the-nub cigarette away as she watches two little Indian girls approach her, shyly. Given Chaka's mood, wherein anything and anyone could happen, the little girls could have materialized out of the setting sun, which is streaming into the mews from all sorts of directions and settling in the mews in all sorts of directions.

"Hey, baby," Chaka Khan says, bending down, down, down, in the direction of the little girl, whose large black eyes flicker in recognition of something oddly not...rhythmically correct in Chaka's descent to her level. Since this is England, the little girl doesn't mention the lag between the time Chaka starts to bend down to kiss her cheek and when

she actually makes it.

Since this is England, no one speaks, not really, so stiff upper lip and...Anglican are the Brits that *silence* is at the core of their chatter. Chaka's lips are full. Chaka speaks.

"It's been a long time, baby," says Chaka, making her slow ascent up from her kiss, the bemused little girl, the lowering rays of the sun surrounding her. "A long time, right?"

According to the *maitre d'* of Chaka's conveniently located Indian restaurant, which is, like, her favorite, Ms. Khan's presence has been sorely missed, too. "Welcome, welcome," he says, escorting Chaka, her assistant Simone, and myself to a corner booth with a panoramic view of the entire restaurant, replete with pink tablecloths and pink curtains and white latticework everywhere. It's like the set of a Judy Garland musical. Or the cover of a Whitman's Sampler. Again, Chaka doesn't seem to mind her environment. She's engaged in getting her order *just so*.

"I like the flat kind of bread, with the black shit on it, you know?" says Chaka to the waiter taking her

## YOU THINK BECAUSE PAULA ABDUL GOT A GRAMMY SHE CAN SING? SAYS CHAKA ONSTAGE. GET REAL. GET A LIFE.

order, who is as thin as the bread. He is gleaming in Chaka's gorgeous presence.

"And some of that chutney stuff, too," Chaka says, in kind of post-performance rasp as the waiter makes his exit. Chaka's voice is fatigued. She hasn't been singing much in the last day or two. "But I've been swimming. Ha ha. Right, Simone?" she asks of her assistant. Simone nods and laughs. Simone has braids and a turban.

What Chaka was referring to was brought up moments before, back at the mews, following our initial meeting, a meeting that began this way: ringing her doorbell, the door opening a crack, Chaka, eyes downcast, opening the door, Chaka, gorgeous, asking me to "Please wait outside," and emerging, moments later, in a diaphanous black dress and wrap and boots (size 7) to say, "Hello." It was after he'd said hello and Simone had mentioned their recent trip to Venice that Chaka, speaking from her 12-year-old self, perhaps, said, "Look."

"Look, see," said Chaka, lifting the many folds of her diaphanous black skirt, exposing me to her wounds. In the late afternoon sun, the scars running up and down her legs looked small and dirty.

"Look," said Chaka, "I fell." Chaka stood there looking down at her legs, the scars running down her gorgeous thighs.

"I fell," said Chaka, a note of disappointment in her voice, perhaps, based on my instantaneous recognition of her pain or, rather, memory of her pain. Chaka dropped the folds of her Chaka skirts, skirts not unlike those worn by Maid Marian of England's own Robin Hood, Or England's own Marianne Faithfull.

"I fell in Venice," Chaka said. "I went to Venice to do the AmFar benefit. I went for a walk after the benefit and fell down. I saw this house across the canal. This house or, whatta call it? A castle... this beautiful, like, house castle in the distance and I wanted to take a picture of it and I walked down the steps a bit, you know, to get closer and I... uh... whatta call it Simone?"

"Fell."

"Yeah, I fell," said Chaka, perhaps remembering some past injury incurred, an injury only little Yvette Marie Stevens (Chaka's name before she was Chaka) might remember.

"I fell," said Chaka. And then she pouted. "On what?" she asked.

"Moss," said Simone.

"I went to the doctor today, for a shot," Chaka continued, after a pause, after adjusting her dark glasses further up on the bridge of her nose. "Elizabeth Taylor, who opened the AmFar

thing, said the next day, 'I heard you went for a swim last night.' It was in all the papers in Venice. Elizabeth Taylor? She was nice. She looked nice. But I mean, nice is as nice does.... When I fell, I ruined my hair and everything."

Which Chaka is wrecking here in, like, her favorite restaurant, as she gets chutney and yogurt mixed in that mane (what color is it?), chutney and yogurt replacing the Adriatic and moss, as she crunches flat bread, not eating her dinner proper (curried rice, curried chicken) because she likes the sweet bits best, which, more often than not, and despite her efforts, keep attaching to her hair.

Goddammit, Chaka, a gorgeous kid like you needs to eat her food. Here's that curried rice and here I am, both offered, paid for—Signed, Sealed, Delivered, as it were, ha ha—expecting to be consumed but instead you refuse—in between bites of chutney and shifting in your seat and various *harambis* about how tired you are and looking into the mirrored wall to your right to check your hair or drifting off... to ask Simone a question that has nothing to do with what we're doing here in London, together—well, you refuse to be ingested, unlike many other Subjects. It's as though you, Chaka, are on a Cloud (ha ha) being pushed around by Someone or Something Else, not a star or, as you have phrased it, "not giving a shit" about being a star, far away from the whole process of raking what's being offered: my attention, a bit of chicken, and what have you.

Which is fine, when you consider how long Chaka's been doing this very thing—giving interviews, having some confusion about her hair. It's been 20-odd years, ever since Yvette Marie Stevens, a native of Chicago, ran away from home ("Me and my Mom, we didn't get along. You can guess who was the bitch") and called a band and the rest is Rufus ("No, there was no dude in the band called Rufus. And I am not Rufus Thomas's daughter. The name came from a column in a *Mechanix Illustrated* magazine. The column was called 'Ask Rufus'"). When Chaka did all that, which is to say put on her feathers and finery and so forth, and inspire Stevie Wonder to write a song based on her sound—a young, distinctly dirty, *profundo* basin of sound, *insinuating* so much, teasing, giving so much—and the song was called "Tell Me Something Good," and it earned a Grammy, Yvette Marie Stevens ("I was raised a Catholic, honey") was no more and Chaka Khan ("An African name. The head

of the African Arts group I belonged to in Chicago gave it to me when I was 13") was born.

To what? In this, the age of the supernova diva's nosedive, wherein technology has replaced The Voice, Chaka Khan, The Voice of her generation, stands, now, at a peculiar crossroads. Chaka, like very few others—Patti, maybe; Martha Wash, sure; Aretha certainly since Aretha is Chaka's only progenitor—is curiously afloat in a musical wasteland where women, certainly women around or over the age of 40, women whose vocal chords were the taut, warped, nearly singular bridge joining "rhythm" and "blues" (The Voice as the sound as opposed to The Voice in addition to the new Synthetic Sound, as in Techno) no longer exist. That is because the supernova diva is never the invention or construction of men (i.e. producers) primarily interested in her image to front their sound, thereby legitimizing it as dance music, the diva's presence being, apparently, a necessity in projecting physical freedom (The last observation is not too far afield from the myth surrounding the colored male's sexual prowess. The myth of the diva's freakish strength, freakish stamina, is a corollary to that).

The new supernova diva (C+C's Zelma Davis, say) exists now in spite of or because of her incapacities. She is less a singer than an image, video finely styled to be (generally) larger than life and placed in a kind of preexisting never-never land where the viewer's visual and aural attention span is perceived to be no more than the four seconds her image lasts onscreen, per shot—or as long as she can hold a note. Flashing across video screens faster than light, the new supernova diva is barely seen and certainly not heard. Here we go! As we proceed (the camera hand-held) to a shot of the new Diva's sneakers, perhaps a man, Her Hair, and almost never her mouth any more, oh, no, for fear that what she would emit if listened to, unaided by computers and a Look, would be a disaster.

That disaster has to do, of course, with the image of Chaka dancing in the new supernova diva's head. Take Mary J. Blige (please!). And her erratic behavior, her strained, unconvincing rendition of "Sweet Thing." This is not what one would call a pleasurable listening experience. In the Chaka-as-icon context, what Mary and SWV and the girl in Snap are really performing is the smashing of that Chaka-icon, the desire to replace Big Mama of the big, big voice with herself: the new supernova diva. An impossible task, really, given that Khan, her voice, her legions of fans, exist still and now and (perhaps) forever.

(Chaka knows all about that. As Chaka said to an audience member during one of her recent concerts at The Blue Note, upon inviting her former back-up singer, Sandra St. Victor of the Family Stand fame, to sing along with her: "This bitch can make Paula Abdul sound good. Know what I mean? You think because Paula has a Grammy she can sing? Get real. Get a fucking life, man.")

In such a climate, what's a Chaka to do? Aretha (it is said) keeps such a low profile because she doesn't like to fly, when what she could claim, legitimately,



The many moods of Chaka Khan (from top): in 1978; with Rufus and Buckskin; and as a Hollywood Square, 1979.



would be a lack of general compassion for her look, her developing sound in an audience under 30.... What's a diva in the age of the supernova (constructed) diva to do? Chaka *could* eat her food or continue doing what she does most days, months, out of the year, which is to tout—in Britain, in America, in L.A., in Baltimore, anywhere where *The Sound* is listened to but not necessarily bought anymore, given sampling and all that, remixes and all that, and there she is (Chaka!), gorgeous, older, and heavier, certainly, saying things like the things she said in New York, recently, introducing a song from her latest, *The Woman I Am*, which garnered a Grammy for Chaka's performance as best R&B Female but not the most *irrepressible* sales: "This is from my album, soon to be discontinued, defunct," she said, in her Tina Turner-by-way-of-much-male-abuse-and-then-I-moved-to-Germany clipped speaking voice, adjusting the mike, flicking at her sweat-drenched hair ("I don't ask for much. Just a \$9.99 fan, please") on her way to sing and sing once again, and in her very own way.

That way, Chaka's way—gorgeous!—means several things to a great many people. But what it most-

ly means is a voice that many people are protective of. In being protective of her voice, people are being protective of the memories her voice elicits. These memories have to do, of course, with that girl in the feathers and Native American gear by way of 125th Street garb she used to wear (the same buckskin and whalebone necklace type thing the new lowercase j-janet. works...*slightly*) 20 years ago, when people used to call Chaka—gorgeous!—Lips and Hips, but no more, given her current penchant for the Maid Marian look and tuxedo jackets and thigh-high boots and turning her back to the audience while she sings, the result (perhaps) of a certain amount of insecurity about her body, especially as it is seen in relation to all those nearly alabaster—regardless of race—video girls claiming the airwaves, looking alike, sounding alike. Turning away from all that does not, in this context, seem unreasonable, given the gorgeous context of Chaka Khan, the voice (and body) of a true self.

"I hate it," Chaka says, dipping more flat bread into more chutney or yogurt or what have you. "I hate the fact that people can't use their imagination any-

more when they listen to a song, you know, on whatya call it?"

"Videos?"

"Yeah, videos. They're awful because people can't imagine what anything sounds like anymore. And I hate the business for that fact. I *hate* business. Wait a minute...I shouldn't sound..."

"Vehement?"

"Or whatever. I'm an artist, you know?"

Increasingly, if Chaka is used as an image, it is as a signifier of past glory in relation to present fame (Vesta, Mary J. Blige). One example: Chaka's presence (by name, by face) in Whitney Houston's remake of "I'm Every Woman," which Chaka—gorgeous!—also "hates" and says, "Why can't anybody find their own material? I did"—still resolute in her nonunderstanding of how her image was badly used, shattered, in some of her early, infrequent-even-then videos such as "I'm Every Woman" and "This Is My Night," so low-budget in appearance, so cheesy in concept, so funky in one's face, that Chaka, hair and all, came off like some scraggly version of Sophie Tucker, spilling out of the frame, bleeding into the gutter of different kinds of memories of *this* supernova diva's drug abuse, her man problem, the trials and joys of motherhood (Chaka has two children, Milini and Damian), which generally goes something like the following:

Someone said: "This was when she used to hang with Natalie Cole in L.A. when Natalie had a drug-abuse problem. You couldn't imagine two women who were closer or more whacked

out—and so talented. It was a weird time; it was weird to see how intense their friendship was—kind of romantic—and how much higher they wanted to go—especially Chaka. Two very intense black women who had found each other."

Someone else said: "I don't know if she's still getting high, but this was years ago. And I had been invited for dinner at her home and the hours stretched on and on and I didn't smell any dinner cooking but suddenly she wheeled what she considered dinner out and it was a Sara Lee pound cake that she'd fried in oil. Her favorite dish at the time."

And this, the famous Chaka Khan story of Chaka Khan moving into a new flat in Manhattan and saying to herself: You don't need drugs. You can clean this mess up. Then saying: If I could score a little speed, I could really clean.

In telling any Chaka Khan story, the tone encountered most during the telling is one of intense respect mingled with deliberation, conjecture around the reasons for her rumored (at times) difficulty. Chaka Khan was difficult, (some of) the facts seem to say, because she is an artist and doesn't live in the world

## CHAKA 'HATES' WHITNEY HOUSTON'S VERSION OF 'I'M EVERY WOMAN,' ADDING, WHY CAN'T ANYBODY FIND THEIR OWN MATERIAL? I DID.

in quite the same way other people do, people who do not give as much as Chaka, who do not take as much as Chaka (I asked Chaka about this, the "love" of the people. Chaka replied: "It's not always a good love. And you have to be careful"). As an artist, her stratosphere is more rarefied, less subject to the boring minutiae of daily life, some diva-watchers contend; she should not, they also contend, be bound to the constraints of the ordinary, socialized person responsible to "Excuse me" and "Please." Or, as one producer of some of her greatest successes told me, "I'm never really sure she'll remember my name."

The Chaka Khan stories one hears from her groupies, fans, hangers-on, is the standard chatter—as annoying and compelling as fly wings buzzing nearby—that one generally hears around the female "star": This language is catty, but ultimately reverential, language (gossip) that is meant to connect the fan to the diva's actual breathing life. She's really broke, I heard one fan say. All these gigs around town she's doing—she's really broke. This language indicates concern, but concern that is ultimately ego-based; it places the fan directly, squarely, in concern's nexus: I can support her.

Not unlike her predecessors in the fervor of the admiration she elicits—Judy Garland, Billie Holiday—Chaka Khan, too, possesses a body that invokes intense speculation. "Have you seen the way she looks now?" is not an uncommon Chaka question. One reason for this has to do with her seeming vulnerability, vulnerability which does not mask strength. Like Billie Holiday and Judy Garland, Chaka Khan sings songs of love. Chaka Khan's difference is this: abandonment of her in a cause of belting resignation ("Sweet Thing", not self-hatred; swooping aggression ("Best in the West"), the less passivity that comes (often) with sadness.

My first exposure to Chaka Khan's work was in the early '80s through two gay friends, both white, one of whom is dead. The evening that my friend died, I played a song for him. The song I played was "Love Has Fallen On Me," as sung by Chaka Khan. The song begins: "Love is a burnin' inside/Never had this feeling before, no." "The" to which Chaka Khan refers in that sentence is the bottomless well of loneliness brought into relief by the fact that love is now "burnin' inside," a sensation that can only be made truly palpable by the fact that it never existed before, no. (Since my friend's death, I have played that record every day, *in memoriam*). When I told Chaka Khan this, she did that rhythmically...odd movement I had seen her do

in response to the little girls, way back, in the mews. Then Chaka Khan said, "Oh, man," and tears came to her voice, perhaps her eyes, but I couldn't see them.)

Just as Judy Garland was, in some sense, the symbol of a kind of upwardly mobile strangeness—Judy at the Palace; Judy on the *Judy* show, on TV looking strange, a singing emblem of weird but comfortable—Chaka (Chaka not on TV much; Chaka not playing for the big bucks in the really expensive houses) is a colored Little Nell who does not desire security, is unaware of any recession except the emotional kind because that is the only one that registers to her, informs her body. Chaka is the girl who perfects, when she is listened to, the notion of *not* being upwardly mobile, not even being close to "making it" except as an intimate of pain, joy. One definition of the great R&B singer: enriching one's poverty of spirit. Chaka as rescue/symbol for the stultifying demands and expectations of being poor, being colored, being a woman, being something other than oneself. All the things you are.

(About Chaka's self: Once, in looking for a particular Chaka record, I asked a young colored gentleman who worked in this particular record store where the Chaka bin was. This young man became very angry when I asked him what he thought of Chaka Khan. He said, "She sold out, man. When she moved to Germany to be with that white guy she's with, she left us and sold out." Another time, I asked a cab driver what he thought of Chaka. He seemed to be enjoying a song of hers on the car radio. He said, "She means my wife. I mean, loving my wife.")

Chaka, the famous teshaper of consonants in songs like "Tearin' It Up" and "Papillon (a.k.a. Hot Butterflies)," where an "R," for instance, does not sound like a letter in the alphabet but desire; where words lose or gain meaning in the sound, the incessant rumbling of soul at the bottom of a little girl's prayers kneeling at the side of her bed; Chaka, who still fights to be heard, reminded me of these words:

*One winter she wore a great light coat... Writing and waiting: that was what the pursuit of her was... And then at last she must come forward, emerge in powders and Vaseline, hair twisted with a curling iron, gloves of satin or silk jersey, flowers—the expensive martyrdom of the "entertainer."*

These words, written by Elizabeth Hardwick in her novel *Shapless Night*, words about Billie Holiday, another Roman Catholic girl who hit the road to change everything we had thought about

American popular music, before and since...these words offered an emotional resemblance that Chaka Khan, sitting in her, like, favorite Indian restaurant, was not especially prepared to hear. This resemblance became even clearer to me when I told Chaka Khan that she was, too, in a sense, my generation's Billie Holiday. Chaka Khan said: "Really? Do you think I've affected people that much?"

When I mention my close reading of *Shapless Night* as one way I've used to approach an "understanding" of her, Chaka says: "That book, they're going to make it into a movie, right?" In conversation, one realizes that Chaka—gorgeous!—has an attention span which is the exact length of a song. Chaka's emotional chart reads something like this:

Me: Are you going to record more jazz? Chaka Khan shifts in her seat and says nothing. Me: Who are your jazz influences? Chaka—gorgeous!—turns to the mirror as if a response from her reflection would be more forthcoming than her actual self. Chaka Khan's mouth stretches wide, in pain. "Don't..." (pause) "make...me...cry," she says, tears streaking her face powder. Silently, Chaka composes herself. Then Chaka says:

"My dear friend Ella Fitzgerald, who is, you know, in her seventies and sick and looking forward to the next gig... says, 'Oh, I've got this gig to do and this and this,' and I don't want to be '70 looking forward to the next gig.'" Chaka says, "Do you like the jazz stuff really?"

I say: "You can't ask that question. You can't ask that question of someone. It's like asking someone what they like best about Stravinsky." While saying that, I think: I like your jazz riffs in the context of your popular songs. I think your jazz riffs work much better there. For instance: Chaka's—gorgeous!—back-up singing on her rendition of the Beatles' "We Can Work It Out." While singing, on the main track, "I have always thought/That it's a crime," we hear, under the word "crime," Khan riffing the word "dirty dirty dirty" over and over again, as a joke, but truthfully. Khan's insistence on performing jazz with a capital J is, perhaps, the great artist's shortsightedness in relation to what they do at all, the "How you sound?" element in any effort to create, produce, something that has everything and nothing to do with the self.

Arif Mardin, her producer for many years, told me: "Chaka's voice is God-given. She doesn't heat what other people hear. It's not the kind of voice that you hear always. And she does not sing in a way that's recognizable as anything other than her own. And she remembers everything that she's sung and basically edits and creates the sound herself."

But Chaka's still not eating. In fact, she's having her food wrapped up as she wraps herself up, her face powder stained, walking away, with no memory, it seems, of the questions asked and not asked, the fan poised, like a bird, on that—gorgeous!—precipice of Chaka, surrounded by the unknowable sea of Chaka's way. □



The woman she is:  
Live at the Apollo;  
hiding out, 1992; with  
her Grammy, 1993.







Boys guys finish first: the Boys on the set of their *Boys* commercial.

# BOYZ II MEN GO POP

*Bankin' big bucks and burping on cue, the Boyz are definitely getting a Slice of the pie.*

by Laura Jamison

Just off of palm-lined Melrose Avenue in Los Angeles, extras, caterers, and production crew are milling around the faux streets of New York, waiting to roll on a new Slice commercial. The all-night shoot is scheduled to start at 8 p.m., but the stylist seems to have brought the wrong-size clothes for the spot's stars, R&B phenoms Boyz II Men. This is not going to please Joe Pytko, the reigning czar of commercial-making (he directed Shaq's Pepsi spots). Pytko is not known for his serene temperament.

But there'll be no tantrums tonight: Pytko's got laryngitis. That's just as well, because it's hard to imagine anyone getting rude on a set with Boyz II Men. If you know anything about these four, you know they are unfailingly, relentlessly polite. The vibe for the shoot is unmistakable—everyone here this evening will be *nice*.

And nice, Boyz II Men have proven, can get you places. The young Philly foursome have reportedly struck a \$30 million deal with Motown, the biggest contract ever signed by an R&B group. Their Grammy-winning single "End of the Road" broke Elvis Presley's 30-year record by reigning atop the *Billboard* Hot 100 for 13 weeks. And with this Pepsi/Slice commercial, they join a pop pantheon that includes Michael Jackson, Ray Charles, Hammer, and Tina Turner.

All this for a group with only one album under its belt. What's up?

These Boyz—Wanya Morris, 20, Nate Morris, 22, Michael McCary, 21, and Shawn Stockman, 21—clearly pack some serious talent. Their timing didn't hurt, either: they raised their soulful voices at about the same time Milli Vanilli were sheepishly handing back a Grammy. Their "yes ma'am's," "no sir's" (their mamas raised them *right*), bowties, and penny loafers make them palatable to all ages and races. And they're humble, invariably invoking God when asked to explain their success.

The much-told story of how Boyz II Men were born has all the makings of a Motown legend. They first met at the High School for Creative and Performing Arts in Philadelphia, singing wherever acoustics permitted, which usually meant the boys' bathroom. When Michael Bivins of New Edition—their favorite group—hosted a talent show in Philadelphia, the four wobbled their way backstage to perform an impromptu audition. Bivins took a phone number and, to their surprise, called. *Cordleyhighbourn*, the debut album, promptly delivered two smash singles:

"Motownphilly" and "It's So Hard To Say Goodbye To Yesterday."

The foursome are quick to pay respect to Bivins, but, humble as they may be, there's no getting around the fact that they're steadily surpassing him and the rest of their musical "family"—BBD, Another Bad Creation, Johnny Gill. They went up against Bell Biv DeVoe (featuring Bivins) for Best R&B Duo or Group at this year's Grammys—and won. Moreover, this latest deal was reportedly signed directly with Motown, not through Bivins's management.

The boyz emerge from their trailer dressed identically in black bermudas, denim shirts, and loafers—working their famous "Alexander Vanderpool" look (he was a preppy character on *All My Children*). Nate and Shawn are businesslike and forthcoming. Wanya tends to stay quiet, though if anyone's going to get smart, it's likely to be him. Michael, with his slow, shy smile and sleepy eyes, is leaning on a walking stick he just brought back from Jamaica. "Most days Michael doesn't say anything in interviews," the other guys warn. It's only with his partners that you'll hear him goof, like when Wanya comes out of the makeup trailer. "You look better with makeup, Wan," Michael says. "Yeah? Your mama look better with makeup, too," Wanya retorts, laughing uproariously at his own joke.

But in an interview, they're all on best behavior. Nate explains the group's climbout of the boy-group ghetto: "We were young when we started, but we didn't have a kiddie sound, so we're not stuck in a pop-corn-type music," he says. "It's that street-corn sound, the music our parents were brought up on. It gets across to young and old."

"There are so many groups around, it's hard to distinguish them," Shawn says. "We always strive for originality, from our sound to our clothes."

"We strive for perfection," Wanya adds soberly.

The phrase brings a song to mind, and Wanya quietly begins to croon. His partners can't resist joining in a perfectly harmonized rendition of "Striving After God," a hymn they learned in high school. "We do that all the time," Shawn says. "We're just four guys who love to sing."

That's putting it mildly. When the shoot finally begins, the boyz sing along to a taped snippet of "In the Still of the Night"—over and over and over, apparently from the heart each time. When it's time to break, a photographer whisks them away to pose for the print ads. They smile and guzzle Slice on cue, but

at 2 a.m., energy seems to be flagging.

"Nothin' like phony smiles," the photographer chastises. Wanya belches loudly. The other guys fall out laughing. Click. Flash. Click.

"Our social life is us four," Shawn says. "Whatever we do we try to have fun. It keeps us sane." Sanity is something to cultivate when packs of press and photographers dog your every step. "We have to take the bitter with the sweet, but we do get a little irritable," Shawn says. "We get mean streaks." The pressures of life in the public eye lead Shawn to comment on the plight of a new acquaintance of his—Chelsea Clinton. Around inauguration time, Boyz II Men gave a special command performance for Chelsea, the Gote children, and a few of their friends. Not surprisingly, you won't hear Shawn join in the dissing of the president's much put-upon daughter. "Chelsea's my girl," Shawn says. "We haven't talked a lot, just small talk. She's going to go through a lot, but she'll be alright, because she's sweet."

Boyz II Men released a special holiday album called *Christmas Interpretations* in October and are currently working on their second official LP, due out next year. Judging from early reports, love seems to be the overriding theme of the album. "When you're on the road 11 months out of the year," Michael says, "you can't really have a relationship. So you sit down at the piano and write." Wanya has a slightly less poetic take on the matter. "Being young men, we're very attracted to women."

"We all have friends," Stockman says with careful emphasis, "but a relationship would be rather stressful right now. We'd like to have the kind of success to take a break for two, maybe three years, get a girlfriend, maybe a wife..." He catches himself and laughs, holding his arms in front of him like he's fending off the thought. "That's in a couple of years, though."

"We have a long way to go as far as achieving the kind of success we want," he continues. "You know, like the Beatles—that kind of longevity. That's what we're trying to establish." Comparing Boyz II Men to that other Fab Four might seem as outrageous as, say, some bloke from Liverpool claiming that his band is "more popular than Jesus Christ." But then again, it wasn't the Beatles who broke Elvis's *Billboard* record. Who knows? There just may be a postage stamp for Boyz II Men somewhere at the end of the road. □

Laura Jamison is a frequent contributor to SF Weekly and The Village Voice.

If your tastes didn't change,  
everyone would grow up  
to be either  
a cowboy or an astronaut.



**Dewar's**



# PARADISE LOST

A typical night at the Paradise Garage began after 1 a.m. At a time when most clubgoers were finally heading home, Garage devotees were trekking through the near-deserted Soho streets. They came from New Jersey via the PATH train, from Brooklyn and Queens by subway, from uptown in cabs, and the nearby West Village on foot. They came for the atmosphere, the electricity, the "religious experience." But mostly, they came for the music: the "garage sound"—that classic combination of booming bass, honky-tonk piano, and soaring gospel-derived vocals.

Once inside, they walked up the ramp of the old parking garage, took a right at the Crystal Room—a rest area lined with glass blocks—and headed into the main space to the dance floor. There they were met with an image both frightening and thrilling—2,000 nearly naked figures oiled with their own sweat cavorting shamelessly with one another like a scene from a frenzied pagan ritual. Six, eight, ten hours later, these same people would emerge into the late-morning sunshine, their dilated eyes protected by sunglasses, exhausted, disheveled, but happy. The dreary everyday world seemed transformed. If only for a moment.

The Garage was, at its height in the early to mid '80s, a veritable late-night underground pleasure palace—what with the cocaine and Ecstasy taken, the sexual acts performed, the fashionable clothes worn (not to mention the clothes *not* worn), as well as the seething promiscuity of the dance floor. But it was also much more: it was an expression of a collective joy that went beyond mere pleasure, a sense of shared abandon that was religious in nature and centuries old in origin. Like the pre-Christian peoples who sought to visit an otherworldly dimension through the use of drugs, chanting, flickering lights, and hypnotic, repetitive music, Garage patrons were on a

quest for transcendence through music and partying, a journey that involved an excessive stimulation of the senses that promised spiritual enlightenment. "It was like an anthropologist's wet dream," said the late John Jozia, a Garage regular. "It was tribal and totally anti-Western."

And at the center of it all was Larry Levan, the DJ shaman—a magical figure to his scantily clad and freaky-looking followers, someone who could seemingly summon up supernatural forces on the dance floor. "He created a sense of spirituality just by playing records," says British DJ David Piccioni, who would later work with Levan at the World nightclub in lower Manhattan.

Essential to the Levan experience was the life-affirming lyrical narrative—one that spoke of love, hope, freedom, and universal brotherhood. A narrative that he wove into the mix with songs like "Love Is the Message" by MFSB, "We Are Family" by Sister Sledge, "Someday" by CeCe Rogers, and "Let No Man Put Asunder" by First Choice.

"He was able to get 2,000 people to feel the same emotion and peak at the same time," says DJ David DePino, who often substituted for Levan. "He could make 2,000 people feel like one."

One year after his death at 38, Levan is still an icon, a myth of sorts. In London, a late-blooming cult of Levan has sprouted at the Ministry of Sound, a club that has tried to replicate the Paradise Garage both physically and spiritually, with varying degrees of success. In New York, meanwhile, the deep-house scene is healthier now than it's been since the Garage closed in September 1987. Witness the proliferation of house specialty labels such as Big Beat, Emotive, Strictly Rhythm, 111 East, and Nervous. DJs Timmy Regisford at the Shelter, Junior Vasquez at Sound Factory, Louis Vega at Sound Factory Bar, and Frankie

Knuckles at the Roxy are all doing their bit to keep the spirit of the Garage alive. David Mancuso has reopened the Loft (which was the first exclusive after-hours club), and a group of former Garage employees have started a Friday-night party called the Source in an old brownstone on lower West Broadway. In the end, however, you can play the records, install the sound system, but the Garage was about a moment in time, created by the energy of a man now dead.

But Levan's importance reached far beyond one nightclub and into the recording studio. A list of his mixes—"Heartbeat" by Tanna Gardner, "Weekend" by Class Action, "Ain't Nothin' Goin' On But the Rent," by Gwen Guthrie, to name a few—reads like a Top 20 of some of the most innovative and important dance records of the 1980s. Though he never attained the widespread appeal and celebrity status as other DJs-turned-producers (Shep Pettibone, Cole and Clivillés), Levan's 12-inch singles were enormously influential on the subsequent emergence of house music in the mid to late '80s.

"Larry educated New York not just about music but about the total world of sound," says Frankie Knuckles, the New York DJ who became "the Godfather of Chicago House." "To this day, there's no one who can walk into a room and do what Larry did." DJ Richard Vasquez agrees. "Larry invented new levels of bass and treble that worked on various parts of your body. He could literally make a room come alive."

Larry Levan was a technical wizard. With Richard Long, he designed Levan speakers and installed sound systems that are used in many clubs today. He spent hour after hour testing the Garage system every week, looking for holes in the sound. On more than one occasion, with the club about to open, Levan would insist on rewiring, reconfiguring, or repositioning speakers, making his disciples wait outside while he perfected





**For over a decade, Larry Levan ruled the**

The medicine man: DJ Larry Levan, who created disco heaven on earth, spinning at Manhattan's Choice nightclub in 1989

**dance-music world from his roost in the**

**DJ booth at New York's legendary**

**Paradise Garage. Last November his**

**weak heart—made weaker by years of**

**excessive drug abuse—gave out.**

**Was it a gradual suicide? Frank Owen**

**looks back on the day the music died.**

their eventual sonic experience: bass so *penetratingly* loud it pulsed through your veins, combined with a crystal-clear top-end.

You could literally *live* at the Garage, as Levan did for the first few years of the club's existence. All the elements needed to sustain human life were there—food, water, showers, music, friendship, dancing, sex, and later a cinema and roof garden. Most people—black, white, gay, or straight—who came were from wealth; some could barely afford the \$10 or \$15 admission. But Levan and owner Michael Brody gave them a lot for their money, even serving turkey with all the trimmings at Thanksgiving and Christmas. As David DePino puts it: "Larry and Michael came from the old school, where the party was always more important than making money." The Garage was a world unto itself, a utopian community cut off from the surrounding city. They dubbed it "disco heaven."

Because of the Garage's strict door policy, membership (which wasn't easy to come by) was highly prized. At a prearranged time on a weekday, hopefuls would line up outside. There, a stern-faced Michael Brody would quiz them on their sexuality and why they wanted to come to his club. The so-called core membership—the predominantly gay Saturday-night members—could also attend the mainly straight Friday nights, but not vice versa. "There were straight guys who would swear to Michael that they were gay so they could get a Saturday-night membership," Mel Cheren recalls.

A select few—Levan's friends and music-industry folks—were given VIP cards and would clog the DJ booth on Saturdays, creating a scene within a scene. Drugs flowed freely, business deals were struck. A steady stream of celebrities—Mick Jagger, Diana Ross, Boy George, Keith Haring, Mike Tyson, Stevie Wonder—came to pay their respects to Levan.

A frequent visitor to the booth was radio jock Frankie Crocker, then the program director for WBLS, when that station was the most progressive black-music outlet in the country. Crocker would hear a left-field dance track such as Loose Joints' "Is It All Over My Face" in the wee hours of Sunday morning and have the record all over the New York airwaves the next day. "Larry was always ahead of the latest trends," Crocker says. "He was the first person to turn me on to Madonna."

Levan didn't play just the R&B-flavored dance tunes—"garage music" or "deephouse." "Larry would play the latest underground cuts from Chicago, then he'd put on 'Jump' by Van Halen or 'Love Is a Battlefield' by Pat Benatar," remembers David DePino. "People would be gagging. But eventually they accepted it. He was the bravest DJ I ever knew."

Larry Levan had come of age during a time in New York nightlife now gone forever, a time of innocent decadence—the pre-AIDS good times, when experimentation with sex and drugs was commonplace. He refused to believe that the party would ever end.

But it did. After the Garage closed, Levan was

unable to recapture the glory of the early '80s. His drug use—cocaine and heroin mainly—his chronic lateness, and his extreme mood swings had always been notorious, but now his erratic behavior intensified. He would deejay intermittently at clubs in New York, London, and Tokyo, sometimes stoned he'd forget to put records on. One night at Trax, Levan was found asleep in the DJ booth in a pool of his own vomit. As Mel Cheren, the Garage's main financial backer, puts it: "Larry Levan was the king who lost his kingdom."

Larry Levan was born Lawrence Philpot on July 20, 1954, at Brooklyn Jewish Hospital, when his older brother and sister, twins, were 18. Philpot, which



The scene within a scene (clockwise from left): Levan in the booth with Mick Jagger; with Grace Jones; Keith Haring (by center of photo) dances the Garage's last dance



he would later drop, was his father's name. His parents never married and Levan was, in effect, raised as an only child; he lived with his mother, Minnie—a dressmaker—in a rambling house in Bedford Stuyvesant, Brooklyn, and inherited his love of music from her. She listened, constantly, to blues, jazz, and gospel singers and taught her youngest son how to use the household record player when he was three. "I'd make him put records on so that we could dance together," she remembers.

Levan played his first engagement at five. "It was a birthday party for a neighborhood kid," Minnie Levan says. "He was so small they had to put the record player on a low chair so he could reach."

As a child, Levan was an acolyte—a type of altar boy—at a local Episcopal church. He was also a bright kid at school, excelling in math and physics, and so adept at taking apart and putting back together various mechanical gizmos that his teachers predicted he would become an inventor. Born with a congenital heart condition and prone to bad asthma attacks, Levan was a fragile boy who would sometimes faint in class. As a result, he fell behind in his work and eventually became a perpetual truant.

One day in his mid teens, walking through the neighborhood, Levan had a revelation. Hearing music coming from the window of a house, he stopped to

listen, and was amazed when one song meshed seamlessly with the next. Knocking on the neighbor's door, he introduced himself to the would-be DJ, who owned a primitive mixer. Levan became fascinated with the idea that the music should never stop. He began attending a private dance club—the Loft—and was quickly befriended by the bearded, long-haired owner and DJ David Mancuso, who encouraged Levan's interest in stereos and lighting.

Housed in the factory loft where Mancuso lived, the club—after its inception on Valentine's Day, 1970—was the prototype for all the late-night dance dives that followed in its wake, including the Garage. Its basic format—members only, no alcohol, minimal decorations, and great dance music played on a clean-sounding system—was widely imitated. "I was very much into the underground thing," says Mancuso, who has never advertised or promoted. "Maybe it was my hippie background."

From the Loft, Levan moved on to the Gallery, and then to the famed Continental Baths where Bette Midler got her start. One night when the DJ walked out, Levan, 19, went from working lights to turntables. In the fall of 1974, he began deejaying at Soho Place, another lower-Broadway loft—this one belonging to technical whiz kid Richard Long, who would go on to build the Garage's state-of-the-art sound system. (Long passed away in the mid '80s.) Next came Reade St., where owner Michael Brody and Levan hatched plans to launch a much bigger venture, the Paradise Garage, in an indoor parking lot in Soho.

The initial opening of the Garage, in January of 1977, "was a disaster," recalls Mel Cheren. "The sound equipment got stuck in a blizzard at an airport in Louisville, Kentucky. And people were kept outside in 17-degree weather. Some of them never came back."

The Garage was relaunched with a string of so-called construction parties later that year, but it was not an immediate success. "The club didn't really take to the atmosphere that people remember it for until 1980," says Cheren.

In the meantime, Levan began doing remixes. His first was "C Is for Cookie" by Cookie Monster, a disco novelty record based on a song from *Sesame Street* that was released in 1978. The next year he remixed Taana Gardner's debut single "Work That Body." His first big dance-floor hit was "I Got My Mind Made Up (You Can Get It Girl)" by Instant Funk. The record went gold and Levan's studio career took off.

Levan's most prolific period came in the early '80s. Working for the cream of New York dance labels—West End, Salsoul, Sleeping Bag, 4th & Broadway—he remixed a string of records that would change dance music forever. Sublimely soulful and musically adventurous, such cuts as "Give Your Body Up to the Music" by Billy Nichols, "Serious Sirius Space Party" by Edna Holt, and "Ain't No Mountain High Enough" by Jocelyn Brown showed that dance music

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could appeal as much to the imagination as to the body. Levan's quintessential work came with the N.Y.C. Peet Boys, the group he cofounded and coproduced with Michael de Benedictis that featured the glorious vocals of Bernard Fowler. The group's best-known song, "Don't Make Me Wait"—with its clap track and a cappella segment—took nearly a year to record because Levan—weekend after weekend, testing new versions at the Garage—never finished until the single was absolutely perfect.

But the same perfectionism that made him the most revered DJ in the history of club music, coupled with a rock star's twin addictions to drugs and ego, would ultimately undo Larry Levan.

One night, in 1988, barely six months after the closing of the Garage, Levan was spinning at the World in the East Village when, on a whim, he decided to play "ABC" by the Jackson 5.

But the chirpy pop-soul didn't go over too well with the hardcore dance devotees. They had come to

hear the sound Levan made classic during his 11 years at the Garage. Some dancers folded their arms and stood still, staring up at the DJ booth in the balcony. Others squatted on the floor.

Enraged, Levan hurtled down the stairs, yelling and screaming, ordering people to "get up and dance." Returning to the booth, he let the record end before putting it on again. When this drew even more protests, he played the Jackson 5 tune for a third time.

"That's when I knew I couldn't use him anymore," recalls nightlife mainstay Steven Lewis, then the manager of the World. "It was no easy thing sacking the greatest DJ on the planet."

But it had been a long time coming. The final two years of the Paradise Garage had not been Levan's best. He confined himself largely to Fridays with its less demanding audience. His production career was in the toilet: record companies shied away because he missed sessions or fell asleep in the studio, and when he was awake, Levan took so much time with each song that the recording bills were astronomical.

Levan seemed to deliberately court trouble. He routinely spent his rent money on drugs, and one time had to go into hiding, fearing for his life, after threatening his Chinatown landlord with a loaded pistol. His relationship with Michael Brody, who had been his father figure, rapidly deteriorated. And then, when Brody was diagnosed with AIDS, it seemed inevitable that the Garage would have to close.

Says David DePino: "When Larry knew the Garage was going to close, he freaked. He went on a self-destructive binge. He took drugs to spite people, to hurt them. The more you would say, 'Larry, please don't do so many drugs,' the more he would do them—right in your face."

Veteran DJ David Mancuso sees it differently. "People made drugs available to him because it kept him in check and under their control. Larry was very frustrated. He could have grown—and he wanted to grow, but he was held back," Mancuso explains. "I

talked with Larry about why he did so many drugs and he told me it was because he was lonely—spiritually lonely. He had no one to turn to who didn't want something from him."

MoonRoof Records owner Will Socolow, who employed Levan at his old label Sleeping Bag, puts it this way: "When you're a genius like Larry, people cater to your every whim and allow you to do whatever you feel like doing."

Larry Levan was encouraged to behave like a spoiled child by the people who surrounded him. First by his mother, then Michael Brody, and then, when Brody died soon after the Garage closed, the extended entourage that accompanied him everywhere—they took care of the adult responsibilities that Levan refused to deal with. One moment, he would be the most caring and generous person imaginable. The next, he would turn into an ogre. "Larry was so mean to Michael in the final days," DePino says. "He got Michael so mad that he took him out of his will so Larry didn't get the lights and

club culture. It was around the same time that the first Todd Terry records appeared, as dance music headed in a harsher, more frenetic direction that appealed to a younger, straighter crowd.

To this new generation, weaned on more brutal sounds, Levan's essentially integrationist message of love and peace seemed old-fashioned. And without the arena that the Garage provided, Levan's talents seemed less special, less relevant. New York City, with its fickle tastes, had found a new soundtrack.

The decaying tour of Japan that Levan took just before he died was the highlight of his grim last days. In the two months he was in the country, Levan was treated like a star, a living legend. Fans waited for hours outside clubs to catch a glimpse or an autograph. "We had the best time in Japan," remembers Cheren. "It was like the old days again."

One night, in a hotel room in Okinawa, he and Cheren had a heart-to-heart. "Promise me that I'll live to see you back on top," Cheren said.

"You will," said Levan. "And this time, I won't screw up."

It was a promise he couldn't keep.

Near the end of the Japanese excursion, Levan fell and hurt his hip. Returning to JFK Airport in a wheelchair, he checked himself into Beth Israel Medical Center. He soon fled, claiming that people with TB were wandering the corridors without masks.

After a brief stay at his mother's place, Levan went back to Beth Israel, complaining of a bad case of hemorrhoids. At 6:15 p.m. on Sunday, November 8, 1992, four days after Levan had been admitted to Beth Israel for a second time, Mel Cheren received a phone call from a doctor. Larry Levan, too weak to survive an operation, had died of endocarditis, an inflammation of the lining of the heart, that had been exacerbated by the massive amount of illegal pharmaceuticals he habitually snorted, smoked, swallowed, and shot up during his lifetime.

Why Levan—who had known about his heart condition since childhood—continued to use drugs long after it was clear he was killing himself is a mystery. That it amounted to a gradual suicide is not. "Larry did exactly what he wanted to do, which was to destroy himself," says Socolow. "He knew he was going to die." Just before his trip to Japan, Levan had told his mother: "Mom, I've only six months left to live. I'm dying."

He was gone in less than four.

"HIS TASTES SHAPED DANCE-CULT MUSIC" read the headline to the obituary that appeared in *The New York Times* the Wednesday after his death. A more personal note was sounded at the funeral service at St. Peter's Lutheran Church on Lexington Avenue in Manhattan. Mourner after mourner—some who had flown in from Britain and Japan—testified to the positive effects that Larry Levan had on their lives. "786 people showed up to Larry's memorial," says David DePino. "Of them, 150 were friends, the rest were Garage kids. He was the last DJ who could touch people that way." □

Before they let go (clockwise from left): The last night of the Paradise Garage; Levan at Studio 54 with Liz Torres; with DJ David DePino at Mars



sound system he was supposed to."

September 26, 1987, the last night of the Paradise Garage, was a bittersweet affair. The previous night two people were killed and one was wounded while standing in line. People traveled from all over the world to attend the closing weekend. Keith Haring, whose trademark graffiti squiggles covered every available surface in the club, flew in from Tokyo.

Under the spell of Levan's narcotic mix, people seemed to transcend human limits. Men crawled about on their hands and knees howling like dogs, while others gyrated and leapt as if they could fly.

After a 24-hour marathon, an exhausted crowd gathered in front of Levan's DJ booth and pleaded, "Larry, please don't go." Standing in the middle of a dance floor littered with "Save the Garage" stickers, they created a future without this "church-cum-cooperative for space-age Baptists," as John Zorn dubbed the club.

The death of the Garage marked more than the end of a single disco—it was part of a tide change in



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A Parisian in America, Lamine Kouyaté introduces his deconstructed Xuly-Bët fashions and catches everybody's attention.

Photographs by Geoffroy de Boismenu

# CUT CREATOR



Stretched, ripped, and sewn to create the newest line yet (of rugged edges, connecting disparate colors and tones), Malian-born, Paris-based designer Lamine Kouyaté and his line, Xuly-Bët (rough translation: "voyeur"), are the flag of difference on fashion's (quite often) flat, monochromatic field of deconstruction.

With the emergence, in the late '80s, of Martin Margiela and Helmut Lang, deconstruction (i.e. showing how a garment is composed as opposed to the "finished" look of fashion as fantasy) appeared, by the '90s, to have reached

its apotheosis—how many exposed seams would we have to see in this season or the next before deconstruction would unravel?

Enter Kouyaté and his notion of the "new" couture: surplus clothing picked and chosen from Parisian flea markets, ripped and sewn with coarse thread. Holes that were rent in the fabric exposed the skin, thereby exhibiting Kouyaté's interest in the relationship between the garment's wearer and the garment.

The designer's awareness of and sensitivity to the body beneath the fabric dates from his

childhood in Mali, where clothes were imported from all over the world and retranslated to suit the culture. "A sweater arrives in one of the hottest moments of the year," he says, "so you cut the sleeves off to make it cooler."

Kouyaté's adaptive strategies culturally—watching the women of his youth having Chanel suits made up in African fabric, for example—form the basis of his aesthetic outlook, sartorial convictions. "Maybe people don't want to dress like everyone else," he has said. *Haute, haute* couture in the world of difference. — Hilton Als

*Prince of piece:  
African-born  
Xuly-Bët designer  
Lamine Kouyaté  
(opposite center) outside  
of Paris studio.*



*These pages: All clothing, Xuly-Bit.  
Styling by Andrei Deschamps. Hair by  
Kerim Namy Studio and Herve  
Roussel. Haircut by Andrei Deschamps and  
Fred Viret. Paris. All makeup from  
M.A.C. - Christopher St. Models: Debra  
Shaw (front); Yvelin Pinaud City; Ana  
Alberty; Caroline Bitt. Xuly-Bit  
one of a kind fashion, are available at  
Boutique New York, 47 Boulevard,  
Galerie Lafayette. For more addresses,  
see the Details, page 118.*











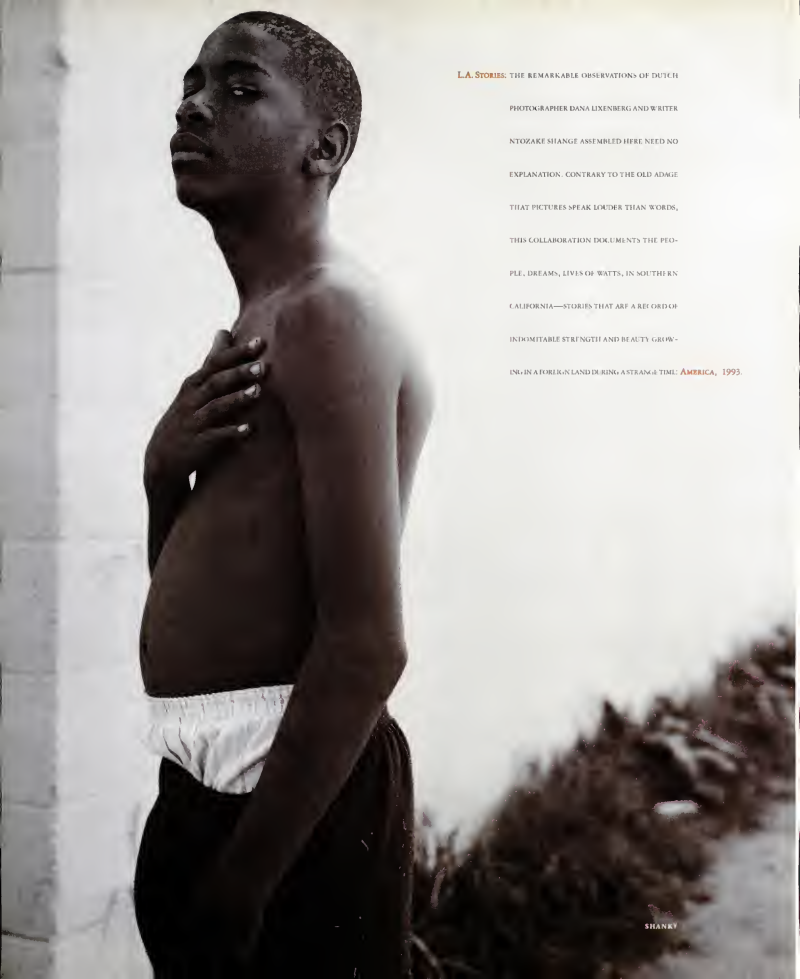




KEEP  
BRITAIN  
TIDY

*Victor Borge*

WASH  
FASHION



L.A. STORIES: THE REMARKABLE OBSERVATIONS OF DUTCH

PHOTOGRAPHER DANA LIXENBERG AND WRITER

NTOZAKE SHANGE ASSEMBLED HERE NEED NO

EXPLANATION. CONTRARY TO THE OLD ADAGE

THAT PICTURES SPEAK LOUDER THAN WORDS,

THIS COLLABORATION DOCUMENTS THE PEO-

PLE, DREAMS, LIVES OF WATTS, IN SOUTHERN

CALIFORNIA—STORIES THAT ARE A RECORD OF

INDOMITABLE STRENGTH AND BEAUTY GROW-

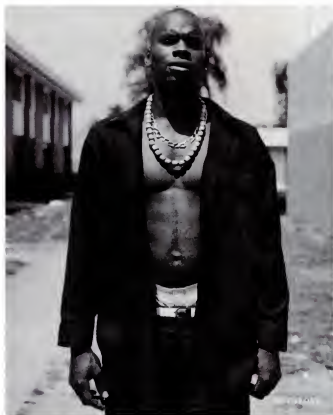
ING IN A FOREIGN LAND DURING A STRANGE TIME: **AMERICA**, 1993.



*Photographs by Dana Lixenberg*







## People of Watts

Where we come from, sometimes, beauty floats around us like clouds the way leaves rustle in the breeze and cornbread and barbecue swing out the backdoor and tease all our senses as the sun goes down dreams and memories rest by fences Texas accents rev up like our engines customized sparkling powerful as the arms that hold us tightly black n fragrant reminding us that once we slept and loved to the scents of magnolia and frangipani once when we looked toward the skies we could see something as lovely as our children's smiles white n glistenin' clear of fear or shame young girls in braids as precious as gold find out that sex is not just bein' touched but in the swing of their hips the light fallin' across a soft brown cheek or the movement of a mere finger to a lip many lips inviting kisses southern and hip as any one lanky brother in the beat

of a laid-back Sunday rich as a big mama still in love with the idea of love bow we play at lovin' even riskin' all common sense 'cause we are as fantastical as any chimera or magical flowers where breasts entice and disguise the racing pounding of our hearts as the music that we are hardcore blues low bass voices crooning straight outta Compton melodies so pretty they nasty cruising the harbor freeway blowin' kisses to strangers who won't be for long singing ourselves to ourselves Mamie Khalid Sharita Bessie Jock Tookie Mai Mai Cosmic Man Mr. Man Keemab and all the rest seriously courtin' rappin' a English we make up as we go along turnin' nouns into verbs braids into crowns and always fetchin' dreams from a horizon strewn with bones and flesh of those of us who didn't make it whose smiles and deep dark eyes help us to continue to see there's so much life here.

By Ntozake Shange













Number one on  
the Bombay charts:  
the Don Raja  
and his people.

*Apache Indian is the world's first Punjabi pop star. Brooke Wentz rides to India with the dashing king of bhangramuffin as he fights for a better tomorrow and makes the teenage girls of Bombay scream.*

APACHE

# HOME

"IT'S NICE TO BE BACK HOME IN INDIA," BRITISH-born deejay Apache Indian announces to the sea of 17,000 dark, adoring faces assembled in Bombay's Andheri Sports Complex. It is June '93, and except for a brief jaunt as a young child, this is his only journey to India. Fireworks explode in the 93-degree heat as a 30-foot crane waving the green-saffron-and-white Indian flag lowers him to the stage for his first-ever concert here. "I come to you not as a pop star, reggae star, or Indian star," he says. "I come to you as an Indian who knows India and Indian people. Selector!"

Whether Apache Indian knows India or not, India knows him. A British citizen who's lived his whole life in the run-down, racially mixed neighborhood of Handsworth, near Birmingham, Apache chats a mix of ragga patois and Punjabi slang over an infectious style of music known as "bhangramuffin"—a blend of Jamaican dancehall grooves and traditional Indian instruments like the tabla and sitar. The combination of irresistible beats, volatile, timely messages, and matinee-idol looks have made this 26-year-old immigrant's son larger than he could possibly have imagined before he got into the bhangra biz three

years ago. His album *No Reservation* (Mango) has sold more than 200,000 copies in India alone (not counting bootlegs), and won him Best Newcomer at the 1992 British Reggae Industry Awards. MTV Asia keeps his videos in heavy rotation alongside Michael Jackson and Whitney Houston. The Don Raja, as he's known to loyal followers, is everywhere. Crudely drawn cartoon illustrations of Apache posing finger forward, gangsta style, can be found on no fewer than 23 billboards throughout Bombay. Sandwiched between a pair of run-down buildings looms a warped caricature on a sign that reads: "A pack che Indian.... Unwrap the Rapper." It's an ad for butter.

With more than 1 million Asians living in the U.K., bhangra—the folk music danced to by Punjabi men to celebrate harvest—has gotten so large it even has its own chart in England. Once performed by mostly amateur musicians at feasts and weddings, bhangra's current urban form began to evolve in the late 1970s among the Anglo-Asian youth of West London and the Midlands. Programming classical Indian rhythms into their synthesizers and drum machines, these kids cooked up a bubbly bhangra

stew of their own, which, by the late 1980s, they were seasoning with hip hop and reggae, creating a more danceable but still somehow very traditional music. At first it seemed the sort of cross-cultural hybrid that could only make sense in England, but now the music has swept Punjabi communities throughout the world. Wherever bhangra plays, from Toronto to Calcutta to Queens, you can see groups of Sikh and Punjabi men gyrating their hips to the beats.

The bhangra movement came to a standstill about five years ago, because a new generation came in and they wanted more of a street edge to the music," says Apache during a recent interview in New York. Though he has become a forerunner in fusing bhangra and ragga-muffin sounds, Apache is also a great admirer of the music of Ravi Shankar, of Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, and of the most famous filmi singer (a crooner of pop songs made famous through the steamy Indian cinema), Lata Mangeshkar. He says he doesn't really care for the term "bhangramuffin."

"The older generation has difficulty understanding why the kids want to be a part of reggae," says Apache, whose music is also popular among black

youths in Britain. "They relate reggae to drugs. They think it's a violent music that involves violent people. This is because they haven't had a chance to mix, to go on the streets. They have come straight from India and gone to work in the factories." Apache's parents left the small Punjabi village of Jalandhar for England in the 1950s, part of a huge wave of Indian immigrants who came after the war. In the industrial Birmingham suburb where they raised their son, Steven Kapur (Apache's given name), East and West Indian cultures mingle freely.

"As a young Asian in Britain, you constantly lead a double life," Apache explains. "At home, everything is as it was—very traditional, very strict. But when you close the front door and move onto the streets, everything changes. I've had so many relatives disown my family because of my love for reggae. Now, after hearing my music, and hearing the Indian influences in it, it appeals to them. But my music is, first and foremost, street music."

In Handsworth, the music of the streets is reggae. Young Steven grew up in the heart of a thriving scene that produced bands such as Steel Pulse and UB40. "My first love is roots," he says. "Bob Marley, Burning Spear—the kind of stuff I grew up with. In a place like Birmingham you see a lot of Asian people picking up things from the black kids 'cause they're living together, or on the playground together. So you hear reggae in schools and in the streets, but you also hear traditional Indian music as well." Apache knew he'd reached everyone when West Indian kids in the neighborhood began greeting him in Punjabi.

Like many other local kids, Steven was also a fan of top-ranking dancehall deejays like Papa Levi and Smiley Culture. But of all his musical heroes, Steven singles out the wildly Apache, Jamaican deejay Don Super Cat. Cat is also of Indian descent, and Steven took part of his name from his musical idol. In 1991, Cat's manager, Robert Livingston, learned Apache Indian was a huge fan and invited him to join Super Cat, Frankie Paul, and Heavy D onstage at New York's Ritz. It was a crowning moment in a young career that had been launched quickly by accident.

Born May 11th—the day Bob Marley died, he'll tell you—Steven Kapur was a welder by trade, but his girlfriend Harj, whom he met trading Elvis Presley cards at age 14, says: "Steven was always into music. His friends used to have parties and Steven would bring in a little system, play records, and chat on the mike." One day in 1990 he decided to lay down a few lyrics and tabla tracks over dance beats at a cousin's Birmingham studio. "It was just a thing he wanted to do for himself," says Harj, "but when he played it to friends, everyone loved it." Apache pressed the song on vinyl for personal use. He gave one to a DJ at the Birmingham pirate station PCRL, and left a handful at Don Christie's local reggae shop. "Don went crazy," says Harj about the track "Movie Over India," which went to number one on England's reggae and bhangra charts, staying there for six weeks. Unprepared for the onslaught of publicity, Apache didn't leave his factory job for six months; instead he switched to the night shift, spending his days recording. He also met a fellow transplant from the village of Jalandhar, Pradip Sharma, better known as Mambo, who became his full-time manager.

In 1991 Apache was once again surprised to find

## KNOW YOUR APACHES

Once upon a time, life was simple. Apaches were a group of six related Southwestern Indian tribes known for their fierce fighting skills. Their names were Cochise or Geronimo, and they rode horses and fired rifles. But then Paul Newman made that movie *Fort Apache*, the Bronx. Soon after, the Sugarhill Gang donned feathered head-dresses and dropped the proto-rap single "Apache," and things have never been the same. Now, there's a whole heap of Apaches, and it can be tough to keep 'em all straight:

### WILD APACHE

A.K.A.: Super Cat, Don Dada. Music: Dancehall reggae. Label: Columbia Records. Known for: Running his own label and sparring with everyone from KRS Kross to Heavy D.

### APACHE INDIAN

A.K.A.: Don Raja, King of Bhangramuffin. Music: Bhangra. Label: Mango Records. Known for: His geometric hairdo.

### APACHE

Music: Hip Hop. Label: Tommy Boy Records. Known for: Songs like "Gangsta Blitch" and "Do Fa Sell."

### LADY APACHE

A.K.A.: "The original dancehall diva and fashion designer." Label: None. Known for: Fearless rude-girl gear.

### APACHE SCRATCHY

A.K.A.: The Bad Arawak. Music: Dancehall reggae. Label: Various. Known for: Lyrical hijinks and cool name.

how far his music had spread. "I got into an argument with a pirate in Canada who had sold 25,000 bootleg cassettes," says Apache. "It all started when I was being called to do big shows and concerts over there. I couldn't understand why, because the record sales hadn't been too strong in Canada." Nonetheless, he made the journey and sold out two 3,000-seat shows as the only act on the bill. Something didn't add up.

"So I went to a local shop and acted like a mad Apache Indian fan," he recalls. "I asked the guy for a cassette and he actually asked me if I wanted an original or a copy. He also showed me a video of a show I'd did in London at the Town & Country Club. He said he'd sold 40,000 copies. That's when I told him who I was." Apache hoped they could come to some kind of financial settlement. "Instead," he says, "out came a fight, and I went to prison."

But neither jail bars nor bootleggers could hold him back. By 1992, after the release of the singles "Chok There" (Punjabi for "Tear the House Down") and "Don Raja" (another nod to Super Cat, the Don Dada), Apache landed a deal with Island Records. He voiced much of the album *No Restrictions* at Bob Marley's Tuff Gong studio, with riddims provided by top Jamaican producers Sly Dunbar, Bobby Digital, and Robert Livingston, and guest vocalists like Maxi Priest, Frankie Paul, and Brooklyn deejay

Shaggy. The experience was a reggae fan's wet dream, but Apache says he had to make a conscious decision to separate from the Jamaican scene. "I tend to lean more towards my people," he says. "I'm doing more Indian shows now. I have to; that's who I am."

Instead of just boasting and chatting up the ladies, Apache's lyrics highlight the problems of Indian youth caught between strict cultural traditions and the modern world. Topics such as arranged marriages, alcoholism, AIDS, religious wars, and the caste system are more than just controversial—they are hard-ly ever mentioned in Indian society, much less in popular music.

"I want to speak on things that haven't been talked about before," says Apache, who knows the pain of culture clash firsthand. Harj's parents have not spoken to the couple for almost 10 years because Apache is a Hindu and she is a Sikh. "Because of our religious upbringing, we found that there are a lot of subjects that need to be discussed among the Asian community—like arranged marriages, and AIDS, and the burning of the Hindu temple by Sikhs last December. I'm not saying that we're going to solve the problems," says Apache. "I just want to bring them out in the open for discussion."

Apache's fourth single, "Arranged Marriage," which rose to number 16 on the U.K.'s national pop charts, finds humor in an extremely sensitive subject. "About me arranged marriage me have one problem," he chats. "When is the right time to tell me girlfriend?" While his lyrics may sound light, the subject is deadly serious. In some Indian families, daughters are considered a burden. If unmarried by age 21, they are "useless." Horrendous stories of unforgiving nuptials leading to bride-burnings are as common in India's daily news as stray-bulldog shootings in New York City. Fathers have been known to have their daughters killed if they marry outside the family lineage.

With his thirst for cultural healing, Apache Indian has been likened to a sort of Gandhi in high tops and gold chains. Shortly before leaving on his trip to India this past June, he received a fax that said, simply, "India awaits your arrival." Arrangements were even made for him to meet Mother Teresa, but she called in sick. But there are those who do not appreciate his airing India's social problems in such a public way. "I've faced a lot of criticism," he says. "Some people tell me I shouldn't be talking about these issues. I have to carry security wherever I go." But if he was concerned for his safety during his recent pilgrimage, he made no attempt to keep a low profile.

**T**he Apache entourage enters the marble lobby of New Delhi's plush Hyatt Hotel, and two impeccably dressed women in bright silk saris appear with a tray of yellow rice, burning candles, and incense. They place a garland of roses around Apache's neck and perform *tikka*, the traditional welcoming ceremony that cleanses all newcomers of any evil spirits. Cameras flash as Apache humbly receives their gracious welcome. The ritual reflects Hinduism—not a religion, but a way of life that strives to nurture the Supreme Being within one's own heart. It's a philosophy Apache practices and it may help explain his tireless efforts to use his music for social change. All the proceeds from the concerts on this trip will be donated to India's National Association for the Blind.

They have in turn pronounced Apache Indian "Goodwill Ambassador to the World."

But even the goodwill ambassador needs a police escort. Whenever he goes in India he is eyed by fans who recognize his razor-patterned flat-top fade, bogle fatigues, and fists of gold rings. He is bombarded for autographs and pulled into politically correct, meet-and-greet rendezvous with important dignitaries—Gandhi's granddaughter, the governor of Bombay, the president of India.

"People seem to underestimate Asians and do not recognize that we can be artists," says Apache to a group of local journalists in New Delhi's sweltering heat. "Being on the Top of the Pops and MTV is big news to them." As England's newest Asian hero and India's most effective spokesperson, Apache is the closest thing to a pop icon most Indian kids will ever see. He represents a new voice for Asian youth who, despite his rude-boy guise and his ganja habit, remains a well-spoken, down-to-earth family man devoted to Harj and their seven-year-old son, Kelvin. He even forfeited his first-ever trip to the Taj Mahal to see his 104-year-old grandmother, who still lives in Jalandhar, the tiny village his parents came from. "The Taj will always be there," he reasons. "My grandmother will not."

Driving down dirt-encrusted roads in search of picturesque landmarks for a longform video shoot, Apache Indian's motorcade rolls through Bombay's humid June air. India is in the midst of an intense heat wave. New Delhi reaches 104 degrees at midday; the news reports four people dead from the weather, and the humidity is still climbing. A plastic statue of Ganesh, the Hindu elephant god of wisdom, flaunts its phallic trunk atop the dashboard of a poorly air-conditioned taxi. Dust coats the passengers' bodies like an extra layer of skin. Bovine creatures wander aimlessly through streets as brightly clad women bare their fleshy midsections with no reserve. Dilapidated shantytowns line the road beside kitschy film posters of fluorescent-painted couples in passionate embrace.

Apache stops the car to pose for a few snaps at Bombay's Gateway of India, a touristry welcoming post for visitors. Hedonists through the garden where corrupt police guards ask for money, and dozens of men scurry to surround the star, girls huddling behind. Apache plays to the crowd, belting out a few lines from his new single, "Caste System." Dreadlocked video director Don Letts (formerly of Big Audio Dynamite) is hoping to get a shot out of all



Despite his rude-boy guise, Apache Indian has been likened to a sort of herb-smoking Gandhi in hip-hop and gold chains.

this. He tries to get the locals to wave for the camera, but they only seem amused by his British twang.

The entourage moves on to a local shantytown in the center of Bombay where the sturdiest huts are constructed from sheets of tin and the weaker ones of palm leaves. Women and half-naked children stop their daily chores to watch as Apache climbs from the car in Ray-Bans and Cross Colours; only his creamy dark complexion suggests that he belongs here. The locals stare at this bizarre sight—a homeboy 30,000 miles away from home with a video crew shadowing his every move. He begins to lip-synch the lyrics of "Caste System." Pointing into the air, down to the ground, and then thrusting two fingers gunsho-like toward the camera, Apache poses like a veteran entertainer. Then he squats down and attempts to talk with the kids. Both sides are trying hard to bridge the gap, but to no avail. They speak Hindi; he speaks Punjabi.

If this trip to India has a single theme, it is cultural gridlock. One evening, Apache dines with one

of the world's wealthiest diamond dealers in his garish home, complete with spinning disco mirror-ball, situated just above the slums of Bombay. At the end of the meal, the host gives each of his dinner guests a diamond ring. On the streets outside, drugged and pimped children run begging for rupees at Apache's car door while amputees hobble forth just to catch a glimpse of their hero.

The reason nobody has attempted to do anything about these problems is because they are so close to the culture," explains Apache. As a British citizen, he's still viewed as an outsider, unaffected by the restrictions third-world musicians face every day. Apache can say, write, or sing on any subject without being silenced by authorities. As a result, he is constantly being approached by well-wishers with an agenda, people who want him to sing about this or that social ill. "Sammy [the hotel suite bartender] has to spend the night here because when he leaves to go home the cops stop him," Apache says, visibly angry. "They take the money he's earned just to let him pass." Compelled to write a song about it, he pulls out his book and jots down a few lines. "Terrible!"

On one of the last days of his trip, Apache visits the former Bombay home of Mahatma Gandhi, where the country's greatest leader lived and wrote from 1917 to 1934. Today it has been converted into a library and tourist attraction. A recorded program pipes the voice of the late holy man through the rooms. Framed stamps and photographs line the

walls. Gandhi was once a revolutionary, but he has been comfortably institutionalized. Gandhi's granddaughter runs up to escort her famous visitor around the grounds. Apache is deeply moved by what he sees. He vows then and there to return and perform a benefit concert on Gandhi's birthday, October 2. "India is the country," he says, "and the whole world is the audience. That's how we're looking at it. We are here to put India on the map." Nearby, three elderly women, frail from heat and fatigue, turn to look at Apache as he speaks. They may not understand what he's talking about, but they smile anyway. Outside Gandhi's home, a group of giggling 14-year-old girls rushes Apache and his crew begging for autographs. "Oh my god! I love him because his music is catchy and he has the word *Indian* in his name," gushes one.

Another has a simpler reason: "I like his hairdo." □

Brooke Winters is a writer and World Music record producer.





One-man showcase: John Leguizamo sitting pretty in Paul Smith shirt and vest, and...  
...and...

# JOHN-O-RAMA

*The latest in a line of street-smart, wiseguy actors, John Leguizamo is writing his own ticket.*

by Scott Poulson-Bryant

John Leguizamo has written and performed two critically acclaimed one-man shows, made seven motion pictures, won an Obie for his stage acting, had two HBO specials, is developing the HBO variety show *House of Bugging*, and finishing off his first screenplay. But when he wobbles into an interview on the rollerblades he just bought himself for his 29th birthday, your mind doesn't immediately go to the praise heaped upon him by the likes of *New York Times* critic Frank Rich. ("Mr. Leguizamo," Rich wrote, "is a star, no question... He is an actor of phenomenal range.") You just think he's a young New York Latino, trying to negotiate the city's treacherous terrain for men of color—which doesn't seem any easier on spanking-new rollerblades. Then he talks. Actually, John Leguizamo *pitcher*, telling stories with the gusto of a confident salesperson. You realize he's a star precisely because at first he seems so ordinary. He notices the extraordinary—the edgy, hip, over-the-top dramatics of urban life—in the everyday. He is, arguably, the latest in a long line of ethnic street-smart wiseguys—behind De Niro, Pacino, Pesci—who find that energetic style just right for character creation. "Those guys didn't have to change and be something else," observes Leguizamo. "They used what they were to create who they were."

Creating who you are is obviously in Leguizamo's blood. His father moved to the U.S. from Bogotá, Colombia, and became a waiter at a New York restaurant by passing for Italian. Had he told them he was Colombian, he would have been washing dishes. Playing Italian wasn't very difficult, though; Papa Leguizamo had actually gone to Italy first, to the famed Cinecittà studios, to study film directing. Now he has a son conquering Hollywood. But not before that son created some dramas of his own.

When John Leguizamo was 17, he was a high school troublemaker, and his teachers told him to get some therapy. "But they didn't call it therapy, they called it counseling," he says. "And you had to go out by the time you were 21, so you had to heal real fast." He discovered his *real* therapy in the acting classes he took at the Showcase Theatre, a school he founded in the Yellow Pages: "I liked the sound of that, 'Showcase Theatre.'" In fact, John Leguizamo is like a walking Showcase Theatre, tossing out accents and characters with ease. Which might be the result of the schizophrenia of his days in college: three years on Long Island ("A rich kid's playground," he calls

it) and another at NYU's Tisch School of the Arts, where he studied acting and appeared in numerous student films. After dropping out, he joined an improv group, the First Amendment, where he began to write and create characters.

His first one-man show, *Mambo Mouth*, started as a series of monologues. With the help of theater director Peter Askin, Leguizamo put the stories together into an extravaganza, displaying a virtuoso's command of voices and mannerisms that critics and audiences loved. But *Spic-O-Rama*, the follow-up, sparked a cultural backlash. Latin critics lambasted Leguizamo's use of stereotypes to depict the complicated nature of a New York Latino family. Even several reviewers who lauded the work in his first show ignored the technique and went right for the cultural-representation jugular. But Leguizamo doesn't apologize; he casually tosses aside the shouts of "Self-Hating Latino" that greeted *Spic-O-Rama*'s arrival. "When you get misinterpreted it kinda hurts," he says. "A Spanish teacher ran out crying. She felt like the whole world was watching and I was insulting the Hispanic community. But I didn't *mean* for it to be a comforting show. The backlash only taught him to stick to his guns, as it were, negative images or not. 'I don't write for other people. I write to and for myself, to the person who can understand Spanish, but mostly communicates in English. I know when I hear Spanish, it's my mother tongue. English is my step-mother tongue.'"

**S**uper Mario Bros. was supposed to be a blockbuster. It was, after all, based on the Nintendo videogame, and Leguizamo played Mario's plumber brother Luigi. But something went wrong along the way. Although Leguizamo says it was "the most fun I ever had off the set, hanging out in North Carolina with Dennis Hopper and Bob Hoskins, playing ball and stuff," filming was another story. "It was the most difficult set. They wanted to make this very sexy adult film, but who plays the games? Ten-year-old kids, who can't go see the film! And two directors—if two directors was a really successful thing, you'd see that all over the place."

*Carlito's Way*, his next foray into big-budget movie-making, has given him another big starring role. It went a lot more smoothly, with Brian De Palma directing Al Pacino in a big, lusty, New York-based '70s gangster drama. Leguizamo's character,

Benny Blanco, is a tough-guy wannabe who blindly worships Carlito Bragance (Pacino). Leguizamo loves gangster pictures because, he says, they tell real cultural stories, except that, when you're black or Latin, people often say they trade in negative stereotypes.

As he awaits the release of *Carlito's Way* in November, Leguizamo has found his artistic outlet in writing. Before he was the guy in *Revenge* with the gold tooth who couldn't speak English, before he was dubbed and killed early in *Die Hard 2*, before playing "the Colombian mafia prince coming to avenge his father's death" in three episodes of *Miami Vice*, John Leguizamo wrote. Now, the irrepressible performer has rediscovered that skill and decided to write movie parts for himself. His labor of love, *White Chocolate*, is an urban comic caper flick, full of mistaken identities, Mafia mayhem, and multicultural male bonding. "I wanna get really good at writing," he says, after describing the plot twists of the film. "Film writing is the biggest challenge."

Taking this time off from acting to create on paper a new world for his acting self to inhabit doesn't really seem like time off to Leguizamo. "I like doing other people's things. That's a vacation. It's easier. But the more I write the more I fall in love with it. It catches you, it obsesses you. Sometimes I work on the script for like 24 hours a day, on coffee. It can be like sex." He laughs when it's suggested it can also be like masturbation.

**O**n the street, two passersby ask John Leguizamo if he's the *Mambo* man. "You was in a movie, right?" Leguizamo nods as he skates on. Later, two more men do triple takes. But they're not looking at the wobbly skating, they're looking at him, knowing they know him from *somewhere*.

John Leguizamo is a star still trying out a host of constellations in which to settle. Perhaps *White Chocolate* will provide the one he needs. He'll make sure of that. "My parents came here, not knowing the language, found jobs, raised me and my brother, and my mother went to night school and got her degree. I've learned from my parents." He leans on a rusty blue mailbox, trying to get his balance. "I'm gonna finish this script and get the film made. Like everything else in my life, I'll do whatever it takes to get it done." As he rolls off down the avenue, not so wobbly anymore, you get the feeling this star won't be falling anytime soon. □

# GEAR

For years fashion designers have been shoplifting street style. Now, sports-wear designers are practicing a little reverse inspiration. Take the twinset, for example. Coco Chanel first introduced the matching cardigan and pullover sweater set in the 1930s. Now Stussy, The Duffer of St. George, Chip & Pepper, and Karl Kani are all making twinsets, but unlike Coco's outfits these include sweaters (a cardigan, V-neck, or crewneck) and matching hats (stocking cap or poor boy). The most effective version (shown here) was executed by Kani with his trademark oversize cotton sweatshirts and matching ski caps. True to hip hop

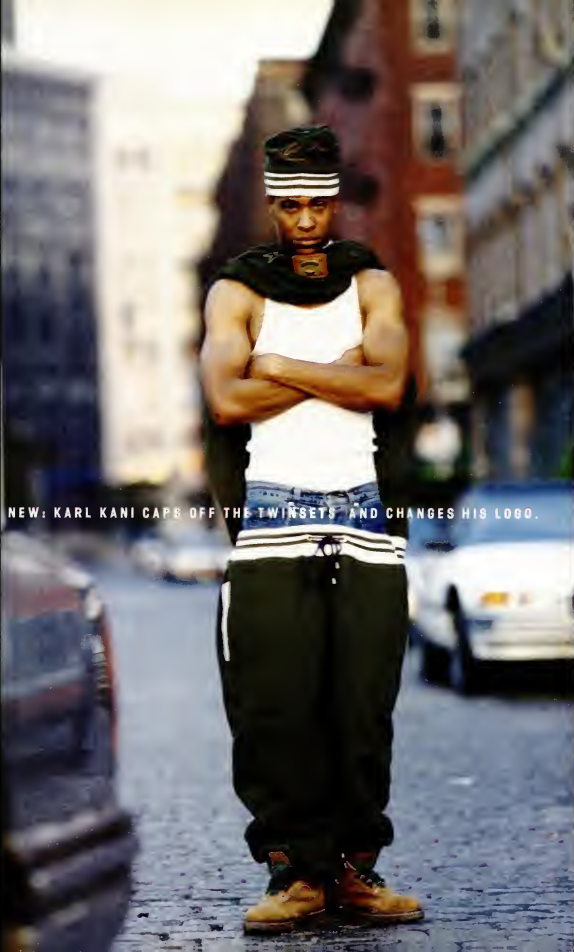
## KANI? YES YOU CAN.

style, the look is contemporary; hard and childlike at the same time.

Kani's twinsets also introduce his new logo, a substantial square leather-and-metal patch engraved with his birth-date and signature on a shield. Similar to the Polo and Armani Exchange logos, it's clearly a nod to marketability, acceptability, and affluence. Kani had to develop the logo because his business was hurtin' from all the bootleg versions of his clothes, which were being sold on the streets. "Anytime you're hot, anytime your name means something, bootleggin' is a problem," says the 25-year-old designer. "Karl Kani is an image. People want to be a part of what's going on."

Image: This is the central motivation

NEW: KARL KANI CAPS OFF THE TWINSETS AND CHANGES HIS LOGO.





of all these copycat antics in the vicious culture we call style. Establishment designers draw inspiration from the streets, while the streets take WASPy accoutrements and ideas and turn them into their own underground aesthetic. Suddenly everything ends up in a stack on a table, stolen

or counterfeited, next to packages of incense, kosher hot dogs, and Malcolm X paraphernalia.

Logos (Fendi pocketbooks, BMW medallions, Gucci keychains, MCM wallets) have been the heart and soul of hip hop style from the beginning. People embrace luxu-

ry items (real and fake) to bolster their self-confidence and boost their "socially acceptable" image. No matter if you're an uptown Chanel bag lady or a downtown Kani jeans kid, logos are about livin' large—or at least looking like you do. —*Emil Wilbekin*

# CRIB

## HOME ALONE

**Joan Morgan goes on a dream date with Heavy D and finds that the Overweight Lover is really Prince Charming.**

I WASN'T NERVOUS...IN THE BEGINNING. ME AND HEAVY D HAVE BEEN talkin' for a while. So when he called to say he was home alone this weekend (his parents were away in Atlantic City), I figured it was as good a time as any to take him up on his offer to hang out.

And the 'hood held no surprises. Money-earmin' Mount Vernon is sweetly and modestly suburban. The block's only suggestion of celebrity were the gold Lexus and the new Suzuki motorcycle in the driveway of the Meyers' house—the home Heav helped his parents buy.

No, the nerves came later when Kelly, Heavy's well-dressed assistant, came and led me from the comfortable, polite formality of his parents' living room and guided me downstairs. "Be careful," she warned as she delivered me to the remodeled basement apartment. "It's very dark down here."

"Dark?" I'm thinking. "*Girlfriend, try black.*" I had just stepped into the black man's version of 9 1/2 Weeks, the love-lair of a multigold-record-making veritable hip hop sex symbol. Everything was panther black: the living room's wall-to-wall carpeting (which incidentally covers the walls), the butter-soft leather sectional, the marble tile on the kitchen and bathroom floors, the pool table's leather cover, and the towering StairMaster in the bedroom.

It could have been the rows and rows of track lighting that were set just so. Or the sound system playing Sade's sultry *Love Deluxe*. Or maybe it was sitting on that leather sofa where one sinks slowly and waits quietly. I half expected Heavy to emerge wearing a silk smoking jacket carrying a single red rose and two glasses of champagne.

What I got instead was Mr. D, clad in a black T-shirt and sweats, tackling me with a long, friendly bear hug. Only then did I notice the strategically placed glimpses of color. The black and white silk flowers near the fireplace (the kind with the adjustable flame). Heavy's gold records on the wall. The commissioned portraits of himself, Malcolm, and Marley. The col-



Overweight Leather: Heavy in his sleigh (or is that sleigh?) bed.

ored candle set in coordinating potpourri, the gumball machine, and the beautiful black clown—all birthday presents from friends. In his bedroom was the biggest burst of color, a white, king-sized leather sleigh bed!

"So how long does it take before a woman gets here?"

"It takes a while. This is my home. There's hotels and motels for all that other shit. This is where you get to meet my family. This is private. And if someone does come over, the doors are always closed to the bedroom. You are a very lucky woman."

"So explain all this 'Overweight Lover' stuff."

"I talked about it and it came true. There were a lot of niggas like, 'Yeah, that fat nigger ain't never getting no pussy,' but women started to find me attractive. I'm a big guy but I take pride in myself."

Judging from the cuts on his forearm, he's been working the weights and the StairMaster, too. His tattoo—a red-yellow-and-green heart, surrounded by eighth notes, that reads "Ona Love"—sits on top of muscle. He tells me that he projects love through everything he does and that all he really wants to do is love. "So what's a guy with so much love in your heart doing alone on a summer afternoon?"

"I don't really trust women right now. I've been on the road since I was 15 years old. I've seen women that were supposed to be engaged fuck three and four men a night. And that's all I've seen. I know that it's not fair and I even know that it's not true that all women are like that but that's all I know."

"Have you ever been in love?"

"I was in love with the idea of being in love. She was the first girl I ever held hands with or went to the movies with, took to dinner or courted. I was in love with having company. I be so lonely, despite what anybody thinks. But I don't want to be with just anybody, so I'll be by myself...I'm not 16 or 17 anymore where fucking is fun. Now it's, 'How do I get rid of this bitch,' and that's being disrespectful. I don't want to do that anymore. And I don't want to be lonely. It's about, can you really love me? Can you be there for me if I need to cry, be there for me when I'm really fucked up? If somebody can sit down here with me and cuddle and be happy, that's what I'm looking for." □



Binge notes in the basement: Heavy D's love-lair in his parents' Mount Vernon home.





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# TECH

The Studio 4/Ruffhouse Records facilities are buried underground in a sterile, industrial building in a desolate section of Philadelphia. It's like visiting a dorm's basement laundry room. No fancy artwork, no potted plants, no plush carpet: the refrigerator has only an open can of soda, some leftover Chinese food, and a jar of mustard.

Somewhere in this maze of nondescript hallways, wearing a Looney Tunes baseball shirt and cooking his original brand of musical sauce, is Joe "The Butcher" Nicolo, whose work is as vibrant as his surroundings are bland. Joe's producing, engineering, mixing, programming, and attitude (with the help of his brother Phil and partner Dave Johnson) are largely responsible for the distinctive sound on records from chart-topping Ruffhouse artists Cypress Hill and Kris Kross to college-rap faves the Goats and Disposable Heroes of Hip-hopripsy.

The Butcher's secret weapon for hooking up such different styles is Akai's MPC-60 sampler-sequencer. "It's made for stupid people who think they're musicians," he explains.

"I like to find very atonal, nonmusical sounds and incorporate them. On one of the Kris Kross records, I used the sound of a washing machine. In the latest Billy Joel record, I looped the sound of kids playing and made that into a melodic thing."

Mixing is Nicolo's favorite part of the process. "Mixing is what I do, and what I do best. Nobody can mix a fucking rap record better than me. I'm sorry." Not that he isn't willing to change; recently, he's gotten away from the stripped-down, crisper sound he started with. "All of a sudden," he says, "I've gotten into burying things in the mix and putting a ton of reverb on it." His longtime mixing board of choice is a Neve 8048, complete with Uptown flying fader automation. "It's a big old board that makes everything sound fat—warmer and fatter than any other board."

But in the end, Joe the Butcher downplays his techno-gadgetry. "It's ultimately always going to come down to the artist and the song," he says. "I can make something good better and something better great. But the saying goes, man, you can't polish a turd. If the shit sucks, it sucks, and if an artist has that certain something, he'll rise above the rest. All you're doing is giving them focus and a little bit of direction."

The Studio 4 trademark is the feel of the place, no doubt about it—these fellas know how to bring the environment of home to their clients. After all, Joe and Phil have been doing this since Joe was in third grade, building their first studio in their parents' attic. "When you come to Studio 4 you're recording at our house," says Joe. "Certain people like that and certain people don't. But the ones that like it won't go anywhere else. You can't get Boyz II Men to record anywhere but here. You can't get (alternative rockers) Urge Overkill to record anywhere but here. People don't come to Studio 4 because we have a Neve and outboard gear. They come because Phil and Joe are here. And the vibe is here. That's why they come." □ *Michael Wilson is a musician and filmmaker living in New York.*



## THE BUTCHER'S SHOP

by Michael Wilson



Joe's bluest: Nicolo and Disposable Heroes' Michael Fraelli in Studio 4.

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## WHAT BOWE KNOWS

Riddick Bowe was once called "Ridiculous Bowe." Now he's the best heavyweight in the world. Clayton Riley charts the rise of a champion.

FIVE YEARS BACK, SO-called boxing experts like Ferdie Pacheco totally trashed Riddick Bowe for having so much dog in him he'd never amount to a damn thing in the fight game. But on November 6th, when Bowe defends his world heavyweight championship against Evander Holyfield, he'll take away \$17 million for a show that lasts, at best, 47 minutes. To get to this money, the man called Big Daddy Bowe has had to get past the memories of a humiliating loss at the '88 Seoul Olympics. A moderately topped Canadian, Lennox Lewis, stomped him in the gold-medal bout. Word was Bowe had no heart. Pacheco promptly dubbed him a hound, as in "Ridiculous Bowe."

"That's a time in my life," says Bowe. "I don't even like to think about. Bad news, man." Nobody knew at the time that his closest sibling, Brenda, had been murdered on the streets of Brownsville, Brooklyn, shortly before the Lewis fight. Things were so mean he was ready to join the army when he got home. The dedication wasn't there, the focus and ability to concentrate on boxing, the stuff that makes great fighters instead of punchdrunks.

Rock Newman, a former Howard U. baseball all-American, privately held some favorable impressions after he'd checked Bowe out a few times. Newman had a gig with the eccentric fight promoter Butch Lewis, who told Newman he was a fool to get hooked up with a low-grade heavyweight, shuffling off to nowhere. Newman, a hardheaded brother who looks very much like an African version of the young Orson Welles, made up his own mind and signed Bowe to a contract after keeping a longshot promise.

"Well, I told him," recalls Bowe, "that I wasn't turning pro unless he got me the world's best trainer to work in my corner, figuring there was no way he could pull that off." Newman took the challenge and went after Eddie Futch, who had conditioned champions like Joe Frazier, Ken Norton, and Michael Spinks. Futch had heard about

Bowe playing the clown at the Olympic tryouts and practicing his Muhammad Ali and Stevie Wonder impressions. "I was out West when they called me," Futch remembers. "A long way off. So I told them to come out there if they were really serious. I figured that would end the conversation." A few days later, Big Daddy Bowe was tossing left jabs under the experienced eye of the

career, Iron Mike was, for a hot minute, one of the highest-paid athletes in history. Bowe has a legit shot at that space as well as untold endorsement wealth. He's 26, stands six-four, and carries with him a unique terrordome quality. Against Jesse Ferguson, in his last title defense last May, he weighed 244 pounds and was in top shape. And nobody will ever have faced a fighter with Bowe's

and from the factory where he worked a midnight-to-morning shift. Mike Tyson grew up a few blocks away. Both he and Bowe found a life with their fists and gained dollars and prestige. For now, Tyson has fallen. Big Daddy has become a committed family guy, maintaining a solid marriage to his high school love, Judy.

Indeed, the future is strong for Bowe. He's good enough to beat the awesome, feared Mike Tyson. And eventually he'll destroy his Olympic nemesis Lennox Lewis, who didn't have to earn his WBC belt the old-fashioned way. Somewhere along the line they'll throw down for some monster cash. In the meantime, Bowe remains focused on his life outside the ring. "I'm not looking to fight more than another couple of years," he claims. "I plan to hit the books at Howard University along with Judy. We'll be going after our degrees. I'm making my plans for what happens after I'm out of the ring. Communications, maybe broadcasting. I'll be ready."

But first there's The Real Deal Holyfield, who's small for a heavyweight, but makes up for that with his warrior's attitude. Bowe-Holyfield II shouldn't be any different from the first in terms of both fighters' courage. Holyfield will most likely be what he was and again take more punishment than he can give. No doubt, Bowe will be a better fighter because Papa Smurf will make sure of that. And when it's over, Newman will continue to make more deals with even bigger bottom lines. But Big Daddy Bowe never fails to keep the megabucks fight game in perspective. "The ring? Taking shots to the body? Light stuff," claims the champ. "Every day's a fight. Death'll be on you unless you fight." ☐

Clayton Riley is a New York-based journalist who hosts the WLIB radio program "First Thing in the Morning."



Boxing out: The heavyweight champ defends his title against the man he took it from.

legendary trainer he now affectionately calls Papa Smurf.

This triumvirate of boxer, mentor, and business director is changing the way a champ's business gets taken care of. Unlike Don King, who works as a fight promoter, Newman exclusively handles the managerial side of Bowe's huge life in the game, where bloods have been creating an economic explosion since the early days of Mike Tyson's

quickness, power, and size all at once. Because of what he used to be, not many folks have noticed what he's become: a boxer with a jab in a class with Ali's for speed, and Larry Holmes's for thunderous delivery.

Riddick Bowe is one of 13 kids raised by their mother, Dorothy Bowe, in a Brooklyn housing project. Things were so rough he walked his mom to

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by **Team** 



# IT'S A BLACK THING

But Koreans living in Japan *do* understand.

by Christopher Seymour

THE HEAVY METAL riffs of Ice-T's "Body Count" pound the cool night air in the parking lot beneath one of the bone-white arches of the Yokohama Bay Bridge. On this Saturday night, like most Saturday nights, the lot is packed with every sort of tricked-out car, van, and motorcycle. There's a metallic red pickup with a dancing bed, a dozen shiny Harleys riding around in formation, a jacked-up '66 Mustang, and a van with an air-brushed mural of a sprawling, naked Madonna. These are not the Japanese whom Westerners are accustomed to seeing. The people here—mostly of Korean descent—are young working stiffs who never went to cram school, never finished high school, and never even thought of college. No one seems to care that they're missing out on the sophisticated Tokyo high life—at least while there's beer, pretty girls, and a dozen car stereos blasting rap.

Black music and fashion are the rage with Japanese youth. Air Jordans, Starter gear, red-gold-and-green African pendants, salon-darkened skin, dreadlocks, and anything associated with the NBA are hip. Glam Slam, Yokohama's Prince-inspired nightclub, has become notorious as a den where Japanese girls party with black American servicemen. (White foreigners are definitely out of vogue.) Spike's Joint, the Brooklyn-based clothing store, is now the place in Tokyo's trendiest shopping district. Spike Lee, the proprietor himself, is currently starring in a rather silly commercial for eyecrops. For most Japanese this blackmania is nothing more than another consumer fad, but for two guys sucking down beer in the corner of the manic parking lot, the realities of black culture hit home like an atom bomb.

"My grandfather was brought here as a slave," says Hiroshi, a 24-year-old welder from the Korean section of Yokohama. A gray "X" baseball cap frames his ruddy face; he stares straight ahead with mean-looking, close-set eyes. "When I read about the struggles of blacks in America, I can relate." No

wonder: the discrimination and injustices endured by Japan's long-term Korean residents have few parallels among so-called democratic societies. It began in 1910, when Japan annexed Korea as part of its expanding Asian Empire. After 1939 the country required Koreans to carry identity passbooks, take Japanese names, recite an oath of loyalty to the emperor, and speak only

considered aliens, while, for example, Portuguese-speaking Brazilian immigrants of Japanese ancestry can receive full civil rights. Koreans are rarely hired as teachers in public schools or for jobs in Japan's vast civil-service sector, while landlords in certain neighborhoods regularly, and legally, keep them out of housing.

"There are so many similarities

his "X" on a T-shirt, is also Korean with a similarly pugna-cious disposition. "Even though American rap lyrics are translated into Japanese inside the CD," he says, "you don't have to understand the words—Ice Cube's anger is in the mix. I understand that outrage. The Japanese cops can stop me—anytime or anywhere—and ask for my alien-registration card. Once I got dragged down to the police station because I forgot my card on a goddamn walk to the 7-Eleven."

Japan prides itself on its sameness, a "one big happy family" kinda nation without the minority problems of other countries. In 1986, then prime minister Nakasone stated that America was a "less intelligent" society than Japan because of its black and Hispanic populations. Despite the presence of Koreans, Chinese, and Taiwanese—as well as culturally distinct Okinawan and Ainu Japanese—Japan's homogeneity is constantly held up as the special ingredient that has enabled this small island nation to become a global economic powerhouse.

"The American media went crazy over Nakasone's idiotic comment," says Mieko Suzuki, a Tokyo antidiscrimination activist. "But it barely received any notice here because we Japanese hear that kind of stuff all the time. Japanese don't understand that racism exists or that it even constitutes a problem."



For some Japanese, blackmaelo is more than just a Toshio trend.

Japanese in public. The litany of abuses goes on: hundreds of students machine-gunned by police in the '20s; 200,000 women forced into sex slavery; 680,000 taxpayers still denied the vote.

Unlike other industrialized nations, Japan doesn't distinguish between nationality, citizenship, and ethnicity. Only pure Japanese blood warrants citizenship—second-, third-, even fourth-generation Koreans born in Japan are

between our situation here and that of blacks in America," continues Hiroshi. "But the big difference is that Koreans and Japanese look the same—it can fuck with your mind. Now, I can't imagine hanging out with Ice Cube or some other tough black rap star, but their music hits me in the gut—especially Public Enemy." Hiroshi smiles. "Maybe I could hang with Flavor Flav!"

Hiroshi's buddy Kenji, who wears

On a Sunday afternoon, a grass-free park near the Kawasaki Korean Church is the scene of a hopeful festival. In an adjacent baseball field there's the sharp crack of a bat. The ball arcs high into the same gray sky that frames the monolithic Nippon Kokan steel plant. The factory maintains an ominous Mr. Fuji-like dominance over the Korean neighborhood in hardscrabble Kawasaki, perhaps the most status-less city in this most status-conscious countries. Yet the festival is rocking. Salsa blasts from a Sony box behind the Peruvian-Japanese food concession. Beside them a foursome of Brazilian-Japanese are

are singing loudly in Portuguese while two Taiwanese-Japanese men ladle noodles into styrofoam bowls. On a makeshift stage two older, kimono-clad ladies perform an intricate fan dance. A traditional Korean drum troupe waits in the wings.

The Reverend In-Ha Lee, the pastor of the church and the organizing force behind the party, is one of the country's foremost leaders in the fight for civil rights. He makes his rounds at the festival pausing to kiss babies, sip ginseng tea, and whisper encouragement to key members of his flock. As he passes by, older folks bow while teenagers yell and high-five. Lee's deceptively simple goal is to bridge the cultural and social gaps between "real" Japanese and Japanese of other ethnic backgrounds—even if the only difference is a dried-out document stating that your grandfather was a conscripted laborer imported from Korea for the Japanese war effort.

Compared with his counterpart, Reverend Jesse Jackson, Reverend Lee employs a less lyrical style of preaching, but he is no less intense and charismatic. In the mid '80s Reverend Jackson flew to Japan to march with Reverend Lee and other activists to protest the compulsory fingerprinting of long-term resident aliens. "[Japan's] Alien Registration Law," Reverend Jackson wrote in 1987, "is reminiscent of the pass laws in South Africa....As an economic giant, there is much to be respected, but no nation should have an economic surplus and a moral deficit." The fingerprinting law was finally curtailed recently, giving new inspiration to Reverend Lee and the rest of Japan's monochromatic rainbow coalition.

Warily keeping their distance from the festivities, a group of old-timers sit on flattened boxes chugging Miller Tall Boys. One of the creased men rises and walks up to me—a white American—offering me a beer, crying: "What are all these damn foreigners doing here? I don't understand it. What are they doing here? I know the damn Koreans are here for the easy living."

But the living's never been easy for Koreans in Japan. One of the few refuges from pervasive discrimination is the *yakuza*, Japan's organized-crime syndicate. Predominantly Korean and proudly multi-ethnic, the outlaw *yakuza* have more-enlightened hiring practices than straight Japanese corporations. For hundreds of years the *yakuza*—who number about 100,000—have lurked in the shadows, traditionally providing vice activities and loan-sharking to mainstream Japanese. With the economic explosion of the '80s, the *yakuza* became heavily involved in big-

ter. In an organization of 5,000 men and youths there isn't a drop of prejudice—isn't that odd?

Preserving the myth of homogeneity compels Koreans applying for full Japanese citizenship—to permanently adopt Japanese names. A former justice minister wrote, in 1974: "Naturalizing people with a different ethnic heritage would be like mixing oil and water....They must be blended slowly, like mayonnaise, so that the transformation is complete." But achieving Japan's ideal Mayonnaise Society by legally assuming Japanese names is a step most Kor-

"real" Korean name. "You can only have one name," insists the handsome 40-year-old. "I fought in court and now Young-Soo Park is a Japanese name—I get double attacks from Japanese passport officials. But I don't give a damn; I'm proud of who I am."

Still, the vast majority of Koreans (including Hiroshi) do use Japanese pseudonyms in their public lives. A Korean name can doom a child to *jima*, the ritualistic, sadistic, and sometimes fatal bullying unique to Japanese schools. These incidents of unrelenting verbal and physical all-against-one attacks (in which teachers sometimes participate) are estimated by the government at around 22,000 per year, but experts say you can triple that figure. Even Park sends his kids to the international school. "In a regular Japanese school," he says, "a Korean name might cause problems for them."

Back in the frenetic parking lot beneath the Yokohama Bay Bridge, Hiroshi says, "I wouldn't even think of becoming Japanese. It would mean that I am embarrassed of being Korean...I couldn't do that and still consider myself a human being." He fires up a Salem Light. "I never thought I'd ever get a chance to talk about Japanese racism with an American," he says, as a smile breaks across his face. "I never thought you, or any other Americans, could give a shit."

Hiroshi takes a drag and continues. "You know that scene at the end of *Do the Right Thing*? The blacks tore down the pizzeria and were getting ready to attack the Korean grocery owner. And he starts yelling at them, 'I'm black! I'm black!?'"

"It freaked me out two weeks," Hiroshi says carefully. "Number one—Koreans are like the blacks of Japan. Number two—no Japanese would ever say, 'I'm black! I'm black!'"

He exhales and stares off for a minute towards the glittering lights of downtown Yokohama. Hiroshi tosses his smoldering cigarette to the ground and mashes it beneath his unlaced Reebok. "They would rather burn." □



Brothers of the same mind:  
The reverends In-Ha Lee and Jesse Jackson in the mid '80s.

money real estate and stock transactions—their level of criminal sophistication makes the American Mafia look like punks.

"The *yakuza* world is one of outcasts—Koreans, Chinese, Burakumin [descendants of Japan's ancient untouchable class]," says Takayama, a tough-looking, white-haired *yakuza* boss. "Because we have been rejected by society, we can understand each other's problems better."

"I didn't want to be a gangster," says a burly 40-year *yakuza* veteran. "But, when I was young, the racism against Koreans was so hostile that it was impossible to land even a ditch-digging job. There were other gangs of defeated Japanese soldiers taking out their frustrations on Koreans. After three or four cracked ribs, I joined this gang where race didn't mat-

ters are unwilling to take.

Lately there has been a slow trend toward revealing one's Korean roots and a few daring souls are using their Korean names in all aspects of their lives. Young-Soo Park is perhaps Tokyo's top hair stylist. He has worked in London and Paris as well as operated three ultra-fashionable hair and makeup salons serving foreign models as well as Tokyo trendsetters (surely the world's most painfully stylish people). This second-generation Korean born in Tokyo remembers when discussion of his parents' Korean heritage or wartime experiences was strictly taboo—even within the family.

At 18, Park made history when he boldly insisted on becoming a naturalized Japanese while changing the "fake" Japanese name he had been using to his

# LAFF RIOT

How to turn a national tragedy into a swell sitcom.

by Robert Hoffer

"INNER-CITY SITCOM: IS THIS a joke?"

So wrote the *Los Angeles Times* last April about a little TV show that no one, outside of the glass boxes of Century City, had ever heard of. Its name is *South Central*. True, the article was no valentine, but what other pilot in TV history could nab a lead story in the showbiz-drenched pages of the *Times*? Calendar section months before its—still uncertain—debut? Such controversy has blessed and cursed *South Central* since the day veteran TV writers Ralph Farquhar and Michael Weithorn first hatched the idea of setting a TV sitcom in the neighborhood of L.A.'s rebellion.

Way back in April, the *Times* wondered, in its infinitely pastoringizing wisdom, if a sitcom was really the appropriate format for a story about a single African American mother and three children living in riot-torn South Central L.A.: "With television's shameful history in avoiding weekly dramas about black family life, it's a pity that the main route to humanize inner-city issues in regular series is almost exclusively through comedy." Harumph!

Actually, Weithorn and Farquhar—who've written about plenty of white folk on everything from *Married...With Children* to *Cher*—didn't disagree all that much with the *Times*'s objections. They were not about to turn the problems of a South Central family into a yuck-fest. Which is precisely why CBS dumped *South Central*.

"The *South Central* environment is more serious than, say, the *Roseanne* environment," explains Ralph Farquhar, an African American from Chicago who now lives with his family in L.A.'s Koreatown. "In most TV shows," he says, "the audience is told repeatedly that everything's going to be okay."

*South Central* would be different. Everything was *not* going to be okay, which was most definitely not okay with CBS.

Back when Farquhar and Weithorn were shopping their *South Central* script around town, CBS took the bait immediately, ordering up a pilot at the cost of around \$1.2 million. But, says Weithorn, "it became increasingly obvious to Ralph and me that what CBS wanted, and the basis upon which they bought the show, was...a more traditional sit-

In the original script, the mother, who is out of work and looking for a job, hasn't told her kids she is unemployed. The daughter bugs her for a jacket, which the woman can't afford. "We want her to buy the jacket for her daughter," one of the CBS execs told Farquhar, who kept having to remind him that she had no money. "We could not get that concept through to the guys behind the desk," Farquhar recalls. "The concept of no money. In other words, the concept of no happiness."

the actors were very intense for that first performance; he suggested that they be a little broader for their second take. "But there's not a lot you can do in an hour," says Lathan.

When the writer/producers refused, on an hour's notice, to add jokes, they were told, "This is what we wanted all along and you haven't quite done it." As Farquhar remembers it, CBS took a look at the final pilot and said, "Great work, but we can't use it."

Ultimately, life beyond the laugh tracks has had a relatively happy ending: When CBS passed, Fox bought *South Central* and scheduled it for a midseason replacement. "For a project as politically volatile as this one, we're having a good time working with the producers," says Tom Nunan, senior vice-president in charge of comedy development at Fox. Nunan calls the show "high risk." Coming from the show's network champion, this comment, as omens go, doesn't exactly light up the season for *South Central*. So, who's surprised?

"You are very often talking to people who are removed from any sort of everyday reality," Farquhar says of most TV VPs, Nunan excepted. "It's scary." According to this producer/writer, there is only one African American in a decision-making position in network TV. "There is no Hispanic American or Asian American anywhere that I know of," he goes on to say. "This is not working. It doesn't

acknowledge any trends that are actually happening out on the street." He refers again to those CBS executives who didn't *get* the concept of no money. "That's how the business will have to change. The stories that are now grabbing people's attention are coming from the circles where people understand that." ☐

Robert Hoffer is the editor of *Black Stage* /West.



Moms don't play that: Having lost one son to a drive-by shooting, Mrs. Mosely keeps a close watch on Andre.

com with the emphasis on comedy, less on drama. The phrase Peter Tortorici (executive vice-president of CBS entertainment) kept using was that it should be the "black *Roseanne*." (Tortorici was not available for comment.)

Though Weithorn and Farquhar express admiration for *Roseanne*, neither of them had the urge to build their show around a black stand-up comedian. Instead, they cast a dramatic actor, Tina Lifford, in the leading role.

Meanwhile, the CBS brass kept hitting them with these odd little notes.

The two producers agreed that the show needed some adjustment—"little nuances," as Weithorn puts it. But CBS clearly had more than a little in mind. "The network was apologetic," Weithorn recalls. "They insisted, literally an hour before shooting, that we rewrite the show and add jokes."

Stan Lathan, the director of *South Central*, remembers that day. "They were looking for traditional joke telling. And they freaked out at the last minute." In all fairness to CBS, Lathan, who also directs TV's *Rox*, admits that



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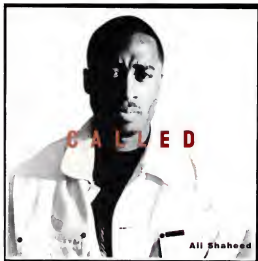
November 16th



# REVOLUTIONS



Q-Tip



Ali Shaheed



Phife Dog

PHOTOGRAPHS BY PHILIP J. FORD



Trugoy the Dove, Maseo, and Posdnuos

PHOTOGRAPH BY PHILIP J. FORD

## A TRIBE CALLED QUEST Midnight Marauders • Jive/RCA DE LA SOUL Buñón Mindstate • Tommy Boy by Kevin Powell

De La Soul and A Tribe Called Quest, rap's Afro-bohemian blood brothers, are back, muscling their way through the crowd, elbowing aside all the knuckleheads in the house and stepping to the mike with nuthin' but "P" things: poetry, positive vibes, and a sense of purpose.

For De La, *Buñón Mindstate*, their third album, signals the group's maturation as hip hop artists minus the pop hype and hysteria surrounding their first album (*3 Feet High and Rising*) and the bells—including their own—that tolled their death on their sophomore effort (*De La Soul Is Dead*). De La is still about "Da Inner Sound Y'All," but this time they didn't feel obligated to off themselves to prove the point.

Consider *Buñón Mindstate* an invitation to free your mind—big time. "It might blow up but it won't go pop," goes the chant as the album shifts into gear, and that double- (triple-?) entendre speaks volumes for De La's creative desire to transcend the media's—and their listeners'—not-too-suitable manipulation of their vision.

De La drop a basketful of pop iconographies (check out the jazzy, up-tempo "Patti Dooke"), flip the script and place an instrumental version of a song ("I Am I Be") before the lyrical version, and satirize Generation X's telephone addiction ("Area"). But where De La Soul truly reign supreme is in their role as a rare critical voice within the hip hop community.

A two-year layoff has given the trio—Posdnuos, Trugoy, and Maseo—plenty to think about, and Posdnuos theorizes bluntly that "the famine in the mind is strong." On "Ego Trippin'," Trugoy proves a black man can stroke his soul without knocking down the sisters: "Smack my bitch up/never did it." Not to be outdone, Pos also critiques rap's pervasive machismo with a hook to the jaw: "Fuck being hard, Posdnuos is complicated."

"I Am I Be" is the album's epicenter, an agit-rap masterpiece that boldly assails black fraternity life, the disintegration of the Native Tongues (a loose-knit hip hop collective—including Quest—that De La once belonged to), and the record industry ("I be the new generation of slaves/here to make papes to buy record execs rapes"). Sans the skills and playfulness of their previous work, De La's voice is now mature, thoughtful, and in a perpetual mode of re-creation.

A Tribe Called Quest, like De La Soul, are back for their third outing. Since the jazz samples Quest helped introduce on *The Low End Theory* have become inescapable, on *Midnight Marauders* they counter with beats

**MILES DAVIS** invented the idea of the modern jazz musician. Duke Ellington may have put street wisdom, aristocratic airs, and scholarly rigor on the jazz intellectual's plate, but it was Miles who made sure the meal plan always presaged the next definition of contemporaneity. In this sense, his entire career plays back as a series of enigmatic gestures bent on keeping the Davis name current. Even from beyond the grave. Hearing that his last concert was a Quincy Jones-directed resurrection of Miles's projects with Gil Evans, I could only laugh, lick my lips in anticipation, and wonder was it sarcasm, sentimentality, or Miles's grand sense of the ether that made him throw us this bone from beneath the earth?

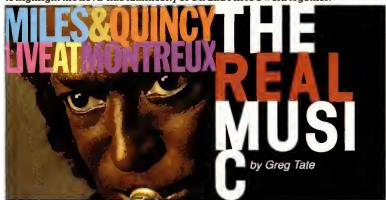
I have little doubt that Miles knew he was dying when he agreed to do the gig. I also think he knew that leaving his legacy in Quincy's hands would insure that his final breaths on the horn would call out from the afterlife to silence us all again. Now that *Miles & Quincy Live at Montreux* (Warner Bros.) is here, the question is, is it dope?

If you're Milesphile, anything Miles did was dope, or at least latent with dopidity, even when the band was bootywax and Miles sounded ill on the horn. But it is nostalgia, ironically enough, that draws us to the last documented Miles concert. (Bringing nostalgia to a Miles project seems akin to an insult, like pitying the man, who would've spit on you before he'd let you shed tears, crocodile or no, over his condition.)

Gil Evans's arrangements are singularly momentous creations in the modern jazz pantheon. The recordings Evans and Miles did together, like *Sketches of Spain* and *Miles Ahead*, remain the only meldings of jazz balladry and symphonic wizardry that rise to the emotive, conceptual, and technical challenges of both idioms. They swing, they have thematic sweep, they are titanic vessels of imaginative orchestration.

Their re-creation on the new album by Gil Goldstein seems fairly accurate to my ears, though the recording can't match the analog legendism of Columbia's engineering talents of the '50s and '60s. Miles sounds winded and tentative in places, though there are occasions where you can hear him mightily struggling to complete a difficult phrase. Wallace Roney has the honorable and baton-accepting task of performing Miles's original parts while the man himself dips in and out and around the charts with nervy skill.

It could be said that the best thing about this project is that it sends us back to the originals. But beyond that, in that odd way that anthologies and compilations have of making us appreciate an artist's consistency and scope, the compressed nature of this document—even its shadowy relationship to the original—only serves to highlight the nova-like luminosity of Gil and Miles's work together.



The new **STEVE COLEMAN** album, *The Tao of Mad Phat* (Fringe Zones)/(Novus/IRCA), was recorded live in the Brooklyn studio he's used since forever. All the virtues and flaws of Coleman's music are in full effect: The leader's agile and superintelligent alto playing, logarithmic head arrangements, and too-tight band being the pluses, the trebly mix on the bass and drums being the usual minuses. If Coleman ever made a record where the rhythm section throbbled with as much heat and atmosphere as his horn, he'd be dead. Otherwise, though, you can't go wrong when Coleman and drummer Gene Lake start lighting into the pocket's ass, with Coleman making daring Blue Angel swoops and dizzying left-angle turns and Lake proving there is life for funk beats and jazz chops after Jack DeJohnette.

(continued) that are less jazzy and more jeep-centric. Phife Dog—"the five-toot assassin"—now easily ranks among the best rappers in the business. It is Q-Tip, however, who remains Tribe's point guard, dishing out poetic justice ("This is '93 and the shit is real/black people unite and put down the steel") and self-assured pronouncements ("my shit is universal") like a cagey veteran. On "Sucka Nigga," Q-Tip breaks down the history of the N-Word, chastises its users and abusers, then reinvents the word ("it's the neo-nigga of the nineties") much the way black folks have twisted the English language for centuries.

The album's overall tone may be scholarly, but the Tribe have no problem showing their horny B-boy side, too. Phife and Q-Tip wax lyrical over and over on the love/just matter, with Q-Tip doing his best Don Juan-meets-the-brother-from-the-block on "Electric

## Quest on "Marauders"

**All Shaheed:** A Tribe Called Quest? We just about trying to make good music. It's not all in-depth or concepty. There's no science formula behind the shit. People didn't think we could top our last album.

**Phife:** We have to prove them wrong.

**All Shaheed:** We always think of ourselves as brand-new. We never think of ourselves as an established-type group who already has a set base. We just think, "Yo! We starving!" And this is like our last meal.

**Q-Tip:** I was talking to Branford Marsalis yesterday about this "jazz-hop" thing. Everybody always be categorizin'. It's just music, man. I really don't know nothing about no "jazz-hop." If it's good, it's good.

**Phife:** (On "We Can Get Down") The Reverend Calvin Butts has been around for years standing up for black people and that's definitely appreciated. But when it comes to hip hop, I just didn't like the way he went about it. Seems like he was putting all hip hop into one basket and calling it all negative. We respect him but on that note, he needs to correct himself. My mother had a problem with me writing that. When I was first writing it, she's nosy, looking at my pages, going, "What are you sayin'?"

**Q-Tip:** (On "Sucka Nigga") The suckas are those who front. Niggas who be trying to rhyme all hard. I lived that shit, man. That's something I vowed never to rhyme about. "Sucka Nigga" just explains the use of that word "nigga." We've taken a word that the white man put on us in a derogatory sense and put love in it. But yet—and still—he can't use it. I know it stems from a bad background, but I'm just representing the street. All the kids in the street know where that shit comes from. Instead of talking at us, talk to us.

**All Shaheed:** Before a group gets into business, where they don't know nothing, all they know is each other. Then they get into the business. It breaks you down all kinds of ways. It gives people egos, attitudes, but we don't let that stuff get to us. We talk about it. That's something I don't think a lot of people do.

**Q-Tip:** We set our own sights. Everybody trying to be all analytical about this shit, we're all fuckin' kids, man.

**Phife:** We're in our own little world.

—Jeff Chang

Relaxation." "Honey check it out you got me mesmerized/With your black hair and your fat-ass thighs."

Pushing his universalist agenda on "The Chase Part II," Q-Tip eggs "everybody"—American cities, foreign countries, and multinational corporations, et al.—to "rock" in much the same way rappers kick-start audiences at a concert. The message is clear: Rap is the dominant cultural phenomenon of the day and it may be the one vehicle able to unite disparate people/views/institutions on the globe. Sound naïvely idealistic? Not to the Tribe. *Marauders* is hip-hop at its finest: acoustically captivating, socially relevant, and undoubtedly for the masses.

Hip hop intellectuals with attitude, in their third at-bats, De La Soul and A Tribe Called Quest have crafted the kind of rhythmic American poetry noticeably absent from much of '93's musical lineup. *Buhdōne Mindstate* and *Midnight Marauders* are rap classics not just because they outclass the competition but also because they dare to be artistic, visionary, and, most importantly, true to the game.

## JODY WATLEY *Intimacy* • MCA

I don't want a gangsta bitch. Granted, no one's offering, but I don't want one. I don't think bitches ain't nuthin' but ho's and tricks, and all respect due to Lyte, but this girl don't want a ruffneck 'cause I just have this gut feeling that a guy who gets his kicks peeing on the street is not the male role model my son needs.

I think Jody Watley's like me. We've both got kids, both got tattoos, and we're both kinda tired of women playing it so damn cold and hard. So Jody's gone and done a courageous thing, because in an era when everyone's got their beepers on stun, with *Intimacy* she's cranked the volume down, pumped up the passion, and made an album of love songs that kick it real, kick it true, and kick it womanly.

Jody's learned that you can unzip more flies with understated, hip-swaying music than you can with ballistic, *uboomped-up*, do-me anthems. *Intimacy* floats by like a late-night breeze; Jody's moved so far beyond her dancing-queen roots that when she gets around to rocking the house on the David Morales jammy "Ec-



stasy," the surge in adrenaline seems funky but strange.

Fear not; this ain't no buppie love thang, "Oh baby can I pour you a glass of Harvey's Bristol Cream" experience. *Intimacy* percolates with the power of love, commitment, family, and responsibility, which Jody manages to make sensual and urgent. "When a Man Loves a Woman" is a syncopated laundry list of loving's dos and don'ts; just as things come *this* close to exceeding the trite limits, though, Jody lays in with, "When a man loves a woman, he knows the realities of AIDS/He won't bring it home to you by some other love he's made." Boom! You've gone from "Love Me in a Special Way" to "Welcome to the Jungle" and Jody's hardly batted an eyelash.

What's always made Jody Watley cool, from her days as a Shalamar/*Soul Train* diva to "Looking for a New Love" to right now is that she leads with her heart and she makes sure to back it up with smarts. More power to the New Jills; you go, girls. But I've got my faith in Jody.

—Amy Linden



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## LEADERS OF THE NEW SCHOOL

T.I.M.E. • Elektra

Few rap groups have ever been as dazily named as Leaders of the New School. Their dazzling 1991 debut, *A Future Without a Past*, zoomed forward while looking in the rearview mirror, deftly fusing the boisterous male-trading techniques of old-school groups like the Cold Crush Brothers and the Fearless Four with an eclectic sonic mish-mash that included everything from the Ramsey Lewis Trio to the Spencer Davis Group.

Where could the Leaders go from there? The answer, as the title acronym of *T.I.M.E.* has it, is "The Inner Mind's Eye." Instead of *Future's* classroom chatter holding the seams together, this album offers whiz-bang song names and surrealistic soundbites that make references to time and one's place in destiny. Temporal complexities may whiz right over the listener's head; what can't be denied are the jams.

## SINGLE FILE

by James Hunter

gives her attitude into a worldview. And Babyface's writing on Toni Braxton's "Breathe Again" (LaFace/Arista) gives the deserving future star melodic peaks and valleys to explore with her gorgeously delatified, unconcealed voice. If the LaFace team disintegrates, the airwaves will be staler.... And who knows whether provocateurs will be able to offer convincing alternatives? *Helmet and House of Pain's* "Just Another Victim" (IMMORTAL/Epic Soundtrax) doesn't integrate postmetal and rap too swiftly. Their single has striking moments; *Helmet's* guitars impersonate crumbling skyscrapers, and *House of Pain* bark out a tough line of talk. But the former merely dissolves into the latter. Techno prodigy Moby, meantime, hits with the faster, fuller force of total realization on "Move (You Make Me Feel So Good)" (Elektra). With a female singer's steamy testament counterpointed against Moby's ultraprecise orchestrations, this is cyber-church.... *MC Lyte and SWV* pursue the slow-hard groove. Lyte's "I Go On" (First Priority/Atlantic) takes its smoky time saying that the rapper and her music will last forever. Offering deliberate observations to the "tongue flappers" that she hears all around her, Lyte wishes she saw fewer willing victims and people with "slow brain cells," never exactly rambling. *SWV* are so confident with the slow-hard that "Downtown" (RCA), their new single, is the B side of "Right Here (Human Nature)," their last, whose constant creep of hooks rules the universe. Their rich twenty whatever twist on the classic R&B ballad works these days because it lets people relax without facing those big hotel bills: they're the current queens of the Red Lobster set.... If the Stereo MC's are a London KC and the Sunshine Band with samples, they import an appropriately easy sense of outrage on "Ground Level" (Gee Street/Island/PLG), insisting even that they're "sick of seeing poverty." And if MK's "Love Changes" (Virgin) is the track that per-



While tragically abbreviated, "Eternal," the opening track, is enough to make a dance floor explode into an instant East Coast Stomp frenzy. "Syntax Era" and

"Connections" explode with energy, seamlessly balancing body-rockin' breakbeats, ponderous bass lines, and dizzying rhyme styles. The album's best track, "Spontaneous" (featuring New School Society members the Crackerjacks and Rumpelstiltskinz), is a meandering bass pop that gives the freestylers room to breathe.

Busta Rhymes' incredible onbeat/offbeat free verse in the middle of "The End Is Near" makes it clear why he's the least-understood but most-imitated MC out there today—just ask

Sticky Fingaz and Wu-Tang Clan's Method Man if you don't believe me. In fact, what more is Onyx than a warped, Tec 9-toting version of LONS, with Busta's "grimy" rhyme style split equally into four parts and the Leaders' kinetic short choruses refined with a more lethal edge?

There's nothing simple (i.e. commercial) about *T.I.M.E.* A hip-hop audience fickle enough to "Who?" 95 South to the top of the charts might easily grow frustrated with the group's minimalist production, monotonous choruses, and introspective, nonlinear rhymes. But in a *Cliffs Notes* world of immediate information intake, *T.I.M.E.* is a novel of an album whose meaning can be examined, pondered, and discussed long after the cover is shut and returned to the shelf to collect dust.

—Choo H. Choker



## TEVIN CAMPBELL

*I'm Ready • Qwest/Warner Bros.*

Tevin Campbell loves to sing. And although his 16-year-old voice is sometimes overpowered by the over-the-top drama of contemporary pop bluster, he doesn't traffic in the organic moans and groans that pass for so much black balladeering these days. On his second album, young Master Campbell follows largely the same road he followed on his debut—wispie love songs couched in lush, romantic instrumentation that should like almost every other ballad on the radio. Only his vocals save the stuff from being truly boring. Dipping and swooping with enough baby-soul to make a mediocre song better, Tevin Campbell's voice is the best kind of hook: You listen to see where it's going, and come back for more when it's over.

Take the pressure-releasing shout that opens "Paris," an upbeat, percussion- and horn-driven jam that's one of Prince's four contributions to *I'm Ready*. That's where a brother be hiding "I'll get his due." Campbell sings over the rave-up, his voice a falsetto falsetto that swings into aggressive ad libs as the song fades. But the fun only lasts for a moment. Followed by the pretty but saccharine "Always in My Heart," the power of "Paris" diminishes.

"Can We Talk," the album's opener, lopes along over a familiar but peppy groove, finding its strongest moments during a soaring bridge and background vocals. And the musical detail of Prince's "Halls of Desire," a danceable novelty number with a spiky synth line reminiscent of some of his composer's early jams, lays a perfect grounding for Campbell's increasingly experimental vocal stylings. With the descending piano chords outlining his passion on "Infant Child," a nugget hidden in the morass of Side Two, Campbell seems ready to branch out beyond the clichés and formulas of typical radio-friendly R&B. How about an acoustic album? His voice deserves it.

Tevin Campbell loves to sing. Let's hope he finds some really good songs before that joy completely evaporates. —Scott Poulton-Bryant



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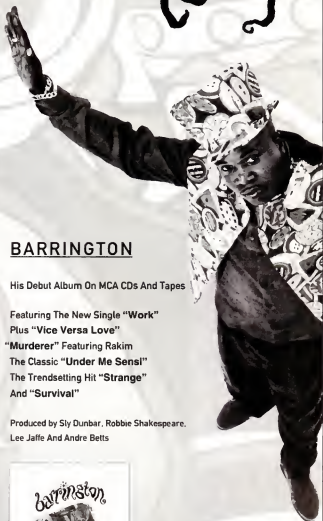
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### VARIOUS ARTISTS

Rebirth of Cool • 4th &  
Broadway/Island

The Brits have long known how to cut and mix black American styles, and acid jazz continues the tradition. Not exactly acid house and certainly not jazz, this groovy, dublike British style originated in London: "jazz dance" dives in the mid '80s, where DJs scratched old Blue Note records over hip hop beats.

The sound went on to rule English beach clubs in '89 and '90 and establish the foundation for the current jazz-rap crossover.

Some of the artists and cuts on the *Rebirth of Cool* collection (a single domestic CD culled from a trio of Island U.K. releases) may be familiar through Guru's *Jazzmatazz*, from Scotti Bros.' strong, if unadventurous, acid-jazz series, or to habitués of Manhattan's Giant Step, but the sound still thrives almost exclusively across the pond. Island's collection breaks no new ground, but it does offer the most up-to-the-minute compilation of the genre released thus far in the States.

The requisite jazz flourishes are here—the Pharoah Sanders sample on Outlaw's "Kickin' Jazz," for instance, or the wild, Monkian piano breaks and crazed vibe fills that haunt acid jazz the way James Brown samples did '80s hip hop. But the jazz connection really has more to do with feel and groove than with a choice sample pulled from the vault: it's the way Freestyle Fellowship ("Inner City Boundaries") raps its syllables around the loping beat like a jazz soloist or Ronny Jordan's cliché-free guitar counter-

point floats over the infectious rhythm track on "Bad Brother."

### DIGITAL UNDERGROUND

The Body-Hat Syndrome • Tommy Boy

Over the roar of the multicolored cosmic Mothership crashing onto Planet Hip Hop, Digital Underground continue to pray in the wild sound factory of George Clinton's cathedral on their latest disc, *The Body-Hat Syndrome*. But unlike the other electric babies who have sipped from the Blackadelic holy waters of Parliament-Funkadelic (Dr. Dre & Snoop, Ice Cube & Kam), DU expand the otherworldly language of P-Funk sound and vision. From the group's 1989 debut single "Doo-wutchyalike" to this album's horny trinity of masturbation ("Circus Entrance," "Jerik Circus," and "Circus Exit [The After Nut]"), the Digital gang consistently manage to transform their private joys into polyrhythmic public spectacles.

It's a world of chocolate synths and Day-Glo vocals, strobe-light prose and goofy poet-ics ("If you missed me, I was layin' in da cut, wreckin' big butts, and scratchin' my...knees," says lead rapper Shock G on the first single, "The Return of the Crazy One"). But it's the groovy textures and Shock's Superfly vocals on "Bran Nu Swetta" that are the highlights of this funky cartoon journey. He and his partner-in-rhyme, Money B, detail their experiences with women who love them too much ("But I don't see the ring, ain't never met da preacher," raps Money B). Behaving more like frustrated Charlie Browns than mack daddies, Shock and Money bemoan the females' advances without once calling them bitches or ho's.

DU's post-Clinton blackness, as Shock suggests on the neo-doo-wop groover "Doo Woo You," can be a hard pill to digest in one gulp. Like any psychedelic drug (including DU's infamous sex packets), it might take a while for the noir sugar cube that is *The Body-Hat Syndrome* to dissolve in your mind. But once it does—ignoring the feeble titer of "The Humpty Dance Awards" and the mournful dreamstate of "Wussup Will the Luv"—it makes for a fulfilling trip. —Michael A. Gonzales



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In the beginning, there was ska—the rude, rugged, brassy music Jamaica's pioneering producer, Clement "Coxsone" Dodd, cobbled together from Bird's bop, Louis Jordan's jump, and Ray Charles's hard-charging soul. Dodd created the Skatalites as the house band for his seminal Studio One, the spot in which he would later discover Bob Marley and the Wailers and Burning Spear.

Growing up in Kingston, Chris Wilson used to stop by Coxsone's place while taking the bus home from school. He met the avengali a few times in the record store built onto the side of Studio One. "I was just a kid," says Wilson. "He was a legend."

By the early '80s, Wilson was a reggae fan living in Boston, wandering the States and Jamaica for lost Studio One tracks. The shadow cast by Bob Marley's death was still palpable. "Reggae was in a really dormant period," Wilson recalls. "Major companies were getting out of the business, people were asking whether reggae would survive or not." He approached executives at Cambridge's Heartbeat Records to suggest a Studio One release and was met with skepticism. "They had heard through the business that [Coxsone] was reclusive and wouldn't do business with anybody."

But Wilson persuaded Dodd to license the original masters of a batch of classic ska sides, and in 1983 Heartbeat put out *Best of Studio One*. Reggae observers still express shock at Wilson's coup. "He managed to deal with the most difficult and the most important man in reggae music," says Tom Terrell, jazz publicist, DJ, and lifelong reggae enthusiast. "He got Coxsone to open his vaults to the real stuff," says Terrell. "And I don't know how he did it. Here's a guy who's been one of the staunchest, most no-nonsense, most mean cats in the business, a guy who's always jealously guarded his best stuff."

Today, Heartbeat, with Wilson as director, celebrates the 10th anniversary of its collaboration with Dodd and Studio One. 1991's *One Love*, a collection of Bob Marley's Studio One recordings, was the label's all-time best-seller. In addition, the label has released work by other pioneering producers like Duke Reid (rock steady's leading light), Lee Perry, and Lloyd Daley, while keeping a foot in the future with emerging dancehall sensations Frankie Paul and Baby Wayne, young dub poet Queen Majeeda, and Burning Spear, whose resurgence was among reggae's biggest 1993 success stories.

Some charge that Heartbeat may be a victim of its own success, that the label has put so much care into its reissue series that it has flooded the market, releasing so-so oldies of largely academic value at the expense of new music coming out of Jamaica. But everyone agrees on the stellar sound quality and presentation of Heartbeat releases. Wilson spends entire days listening to a single reel of tape and furiously scrawling notes, trying to construct albums out of scattered, incomplete songs, to hear sequences, to figure out who's playing drums or bass on a certain track since most of the original master tapes—sometimes covered with dust and rat droppings and bearing visible teeth marks from Jamaican rodents—are poorly annotated. "It's like being an archaeologist," says Wilson. "You find a lot of things you don't expect to find."

Does Wilson catch extra flak as a white guy working in the reggae business? "I'm not only a fan of Jamaican music," he says, "but I think that in some ways I'm there to protect it. And I think people see that."

—Scott Timberg

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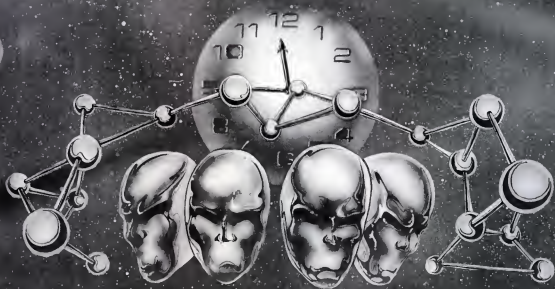


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The Medicine Man

## BLACK MOON

Enta Da Stage • Wreck

Every good rap lyricist has to be part Edward R. Murrow. Without the aid of a newsreel, the MC relies on his words and the beat to convey the day's headlines. And if rap is "Black America's CNN," to use Chuck D's oft-quoted line, then Black Moon's debut album offers some of the most arresting reportage in a long time.

In typical gangsta fashion, this trio from Brooklyn depicts life in their neck of the 'hood as a maelstrom of corpses, guns, and blunt smoke. What's unique about the group's treatment of these standard themes is their sincerity: There are no self-conscious intermissions between songs, no cartoonish renderings of ghetto life. The 14 tracks on *Enta Da Stage* are undiluted street stories, delivered with such intensity that they sound almost confessional despite their assured swagger. Folks who liked "Who Got Da Props," Black Moon's popular single from last year, and expect more of the same radio-friendly effervescence are in for a rude awakening.

The opening salvo, "Powful Impact!," sets a brisk tone with Buckshot's incredible flow and the muscular rhythmic foundation of DJ Evil Dee. "Niguz Talk Shit" is also memorable for Evil's flair behind the boards, with a spooky-ass bass line and a trumpet cry wafting through the air like fog amid a jagged urban skyline. Several cuts, most notably "Ack Like U Want It," feature 5 Ft. Excelerator as an enthusiastic and capable sideman to Buckshot's more polished lead.

Black Moon is definitely a work-in-progress, though, and despite the undeniable energy of *Enta Da Stage*, its best work lies ahead. As 5 Ft. comes into his own, Buckshot will hopefully learn to pare down his flow to the dramatic essentials, as all gifted soloists from Miles Davis to KRS-One ultimately discover. And for Black Moon to blow up to the next level, a larger dose of humor, no matter how dark, will be in order. Even Onyx make you crack a smile every now and then.

—Chris H. Smith



## JOSHUA REDMAN

Wish • Warner Bros.

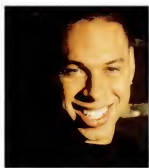
Tenor-saxophonist Joshua Redman's second release is the latest chapter in a jazz-to-riches story. The saga thus far: The son of a celebrated jazz musician wins a saxophone competition, signs a record deal, and records an impressive, self-titled debut album.

On his follow-up, *Wish*—a healthy mix of bebop and blues with doses of Afro-Latin and pop—Redman raises the stakes by enlisting guitarist Pat Metheny, bassist Charlie Haden, and drummer Billy Higgins. All three sidemen (like Joshua's father, saxophonist Dewey Redman) have played with avant-garde saxophonist/composer Ornette Coleman, whose presence is felt on several of the album's 10 tracks.

"Turnaround," written by Coleman, showcases Redman's throaty, blues-drenched, angular phrasing, while "The Deserving Many," a Coleman-inspired uptempo workout penned by Redman, highlights the call-and-response

interplay between Redman and Metheny. The saxophonist skillfully navigates the rapid-fire bebop chord progressions of "Moose the Mooche" and swings softly on the Wes Montgomery tip with "Soul Dance," a Latin-tinged, West Coast groove designed for car cruising.

Unlike many musicians of





his generation, Redman is not afraid to continue the jazz tradition of interpreting contemporary pop tunes. Redman's lyrical, impassioned renditions of Stevie Wonder's "Make Sute You're Sure" and Eric Clapton's "Tears in Heaven" focus less on improvisational flights of fancy than on the simple beauty of the melodies.

This effort from 24-year-old Joshua Redman shows that hearing the journey of a musical voice in progress can be every bit as exciting as the arrival of the finished product. —Eugene Holley Jr.



## ED O.G. & DA BULLDOGS Roxbury 02119 • Mercury

Even if it's as much the product of luck as it is genius, the third cut on Ed O.G. & Da Bulldogs' sophomore album has the makings of a hip hop classic. Taking its title from an old Arthur Conley song, "Love Comes and Goes" finds Ed O.G. leaning heart-first into a funeral procession of shuddering bass waves, hard snare thwacks, and gently fingered guitar. As Ed raps out eulogies to the friends and father he lost to senseless gunfire, Conley's looped refrain—"love comes and goes"—is transformed from the self-pitying howl of a jilted lover into the aching resignation of a generation. Love's fickleness isn't even an issue in a world where relationships are routinely cut short by a bullet.

While not as perfectly realized as this song, the best of *Roxbury 02119* follows a similar pattern: straight

ghetto-centric rhymes set to the simple but never simplistic bass-heavy montages of the crate-digging Diamond and "Rhythm Nigga" Joe Mansfield. On bumping cuts like "Streets of the Ghetto" and "Less Than Zero," Ed O.G. makes up for the lack of documentary detail that the album's title promises by showing himself to be a quintessential blues man—he conveys the generalized hazards of ghetto life in no more than a few words.

Where Ed falls short of the competition is in the big-boasting tracks that make up the album's other half. Bragging about his many styles more than he demonstrates them, he abuses similes like Jason abuses sequels: He "sticks like Shaquille," "swings like a monkey," "gets real fly like that guy Lee Majors" (huh?), and so on and so on and so on. But even at his most shameless, this O.G. makes sure there's a message to his manliness: Put down the guns, stop beating on women, and, of course, be a father to your child.

—Carter Harris

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On the incredible follow-up to his GRP debut, *Ivory Pyramid*, Ramsey Lewis is reunited with Maurice White in a special co-production of "Who Are You?". *Sky Islands* also features a rendition of "Come Back To Me" as well as a medley of Ramsey's hits "Hang on Sloopy," "In Crowd," "Wade In The Water."

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**DEL THE FUNKYHOMOSAPIEN** No Need For Alarm • Elektra

By the time his cheerfully oddball *I Wish My Brother George Was Here* dropped in 1991, boy wonder Del thought the album was already hella-ancient. Representing Oaktown, he worried about getting lumped in with the slow-rolling P-Funk flow of the brothers down the hill. The Funky One's un-ghettocentric outlook and off-center humor, though, saved him from his home-



town's Too Short stereotype.

On *No Need For Alarm*, he discards the highwire, take-it-to-the-stage production of the Boogiemens for something more humble. Beats and loops (by an eclectic handful of producers) get fuzzier, more eccentric, while the rhymes become less so. None of the last album's Dabolina-type wannabes, cartoon macks, or lush psychedelic reveries here. Success has bred Kurt Cobain-esque angst in his postadolescent male's world.

Jaded, Del obsesses over getting faded, and in songs like "Wrongplace," he frets himself into a state of siege. Sick of it all, Del's fighting back. On "Check It Out," he administers a verbal pistol-whipping to a female music critic. "My anger is real," he asserts.

Not that he's become a sour geezer. On "Thank You," he pats his mom on the back for letting him continue to rap and celebrates his new harvest of dank. But it's on posse cuts like "No More Worries" that the beats really tighten and the flow loosens, with the Hieroglyphics crew (which also includes Souls of Mischief and Casual) egging Del higher. As he says on one track, "This is not the best that I can offer, I'ma save some for later." Until the next episode, as Del grows into manhood, it's good enough.

—Jeff Chang

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## RED FOX As A Matter of Fox • Elektra

Every day, Brooklyn, U.S.A., looks and sounds more like a West Indian colony. Full of Jamaicans for years, the borough is a hotbed of dancehall talent, but until recently DJs and singers who had "gwaan a foreign" were antipatriots given no props in Kingston or anywhere else. Suddenly, this is all changing, thanks to an unofficial posse of New York artists, most of whom began their careers recording for reggae indie Signet Records.

Shaggy's worldwide number-one hit, "Oh Carolina," struck a big blow for Brooklyn badness, but for my money, Red Fox is the king of the crew. Growling like a two-packs-of-Newports hangover, Fox and his voice demand attention whether he's running amok over a sparse bogle rhythm, a gospel-flavored R&B track, or a hip hop hatchback-cracker.

Balancing the conscious lyrics of "Born Again Black Man" with slack tales of his sexploits, gal-yuh-body-good endearments, safe-sex promo patter, and the "don't test" battle rap of "Dem a Murderer," Fox handles all of dancehall's sometimes conflicting

modes of expression at once on *As a Matter of Fox*. But most listeners will be too busy nodding their heads and checking the deft turns of phrase to worry about contradiction. With production by JA superstars Dave Kelly and Bobby Digital, Brooklyn upstarts Bobby Konders and Sting International (Signet's producer-in-residence), and hip hop innovators DJ Premier and Brand Nubian, it's no surprise that the tracks slam, but this is a genuinely eclectic grab bag of styles.

Red Fox, thankfully enough, is one of those few performers who can make you fire two-gun salutes no matter what he's rhyming on. Pausing only to introduce the rest of the Brooklyn posse, several of whom are doubtless already headed for their own major-label debuts, and to let Brand Nubian return a guest-spot favor, Fox and his skills make everybody else on the record look bad. Then he thanks them for coming.

—Richard Nixon



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## D:REAM On • Giant/Sire

These days, most dance departments at record labels throw a slew of singles at DJs, see what charts, and call it "artist development." It makes it awfully hard for club artists to think beyond their next single, let alone contemplate tackling a full-length album. Aside from Ce Peniston's *Finally* and Lil' Louis & the World's *Journey With the Lonely*, aficionados of quality dance music have had little to cheer about recently. That is, until now, thanks to U.K. outfit D:REAM, who gallantly rise to the forefront with their shining debut, *On*, full of sample-free songs concerned more with human emotions than with fleeting fashion trends.

Composed of Irish songwriter/vocalist Peter Cunnah and Scottish DJ/producer Al Mackenzie, D:REAM scored big early with the buoyant smash "U R the Best Thing," but the group's musical skills go well beyond that uplifting first single. From the opening piano break of "Take Me Away" (recalling Rozalla's rave classic "Everybody's Free") to the campy disco romp of "I Like It," complete with spiraling string parts, straight through the tender, gospel-tinged pop ballad "Blame It on Me," Cunnah and Mackenzie cover a broad spectrum of styles and neatly tie all of these strands into a tight package.

More than anything, *On* is a reflection of the twosome's exquisite taste and soulful influences. D:REAM aren't looking to break new sonic ground but rather to use classic references to write top-notch tunes. Listen closely to this album—there's a little Sylvester, a tad of Spandau Ballet, and lots of surprises in D:REAM's mix; the ambient track "Glorious" even has a rollicking Ottmar Liebert-style flamenco guitar solo and vocals from a Portuguese diva. It's a festive house party D:REAM have invited you to, and you'd be foolish not to attend.

—Darren Ressler

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## THE DETAILS

### Page 35

Isaac Mizrahi gowns: (left) \$2,195, (right) \$1,625, both available at Ultimo, Chicago.

### Page 44

Yohji Yamamoto plaid button-front shirt \$345, plaid pants \$395, available at Yohji Yamamoto boutique, NYC; Max Field, L.A. Tie \$140, available at Yohji Yamamoto boutique, NYC; Charivari, NYC. Alain Mikli tortoiseshell cat-eye glasses \$250, available at Cohen Fashion Optical, NYC; City Optical, S.F., CA. Aluminum and beaded choker as hat band, available at Craft Caravan, 63 Greene St., NYC. Henry Duarte long wool vest \$920, leather moccasin boots \$350, special order Henry Duarte, Beverly Blvd., L.A., CA.

### Page 46

Yarn-laced pants made of wallpaper by Masha Calloway. Wallpaper furnished by Astro-boy. Converse gray-and-burgundy plaid sneakers \$35, 1-800-428-7667. Stacks added at Alex Shoe Repair, 57 Second Ave., NYC.

### Page 47

Feather-trimmed coat by Masha Calloway.

### Page 49

Giorgio Armani double-breasted wool crepe navy pinstripe suit \$1,800, available at Giorgio Armani boutiques. Cross Colours black-and-antler henley approx. \$48, available at Macy's nationwide, A&S Plaza, NYC. Melanie Rock for Yama Yarns turquoise crocheted hat approx. \$35, available at TG-170, 170 Ludlow St., NYC. Dolce & Gabbana patchwork knit scarf \$225, available at Bagutta, NYC; Charivari, NYC. Beaded bracelet available at Tents Kedar, Brooklyn, N.Y., 718-723-6638. Disk ring by Kenny G, 212-370-1305. Rings from Craft Caravan.

Henry Duarte wool and leather cape \$1,175, wool and leather trousers \$780, both available by special order. Bracelet from Ballistics by Calvin Batts and Tyekia Watts for Xuly-B&T, available at If Boutique, NYC. Metal bracelets by Kenny G.

### Page 70

Xuly-B&T, available at Barneys New York, 106 Seventh Ave., NYC, 212-929-9000; If Boutique, 474 West Broadway, NYC, 212-533-8660; Galeries Lafayette, 10 East 57th St., NYC. Necklace from Ballistics by Calvin Batts and Tyekia Watts for Xuly-B&T, available at If Boutique, NYC.



### Page 90

Karl Kani moss green sweatshirt with logo \$88, sweatpants \$80, cap \$24, available at Macy's nationwide; Simon's, Brooklyn, N.Y. Levi's Silver Bat Baggy Fit jeans \$62.50, 1-800-USA-Levi. Jockey International, Inc. white cotton rib tank \$5.30 each/3-pack \$14.50, available at department and specialty stores. Calvin Klein in gripper shorts \$16, available at Bloomingdale's; Macy's. Dickies Footwear boots, 1-800-486-4266.

### Page 91

Karl Kani sunflower yellow twister, sweat-shirt \$88, cap \$24, available at Merry-Go-Round, nationwide; Macy's, nationwide.

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# PROPS

# FAT ALBERT AND THE COSBY KIDS

BY CATHEEN CAMPBELL

Think back to that goof-iest of ghetto youth. Think back to the way it turned inner-city living into an around-the-way wonderland without being *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood*.

Think about how each kid reminded you of someone from your 'hood, if not of you yourself. Think past the laughs you remember (for a minute, okay?)—because underneath the humor, there were very real-out reasons why *Fat Albert* and the *Cosby Kids* never asked you to tune into the fear of a black childhood. Rewinding the fermentation for sugar-coated nostalgia, the show's creator, Bill Cosby, updated memories of his Philadelphia homeboys, recasting them as entertaining and educational characters. When the Saturday-morning cartoon premiered in 1972, "blatant" films were filling theaters with violent black suggestions. Kids were either absent from these movies, precociously streetwise, or innocent little afterthoughts. But not the *Cosby Kids*. All members of the prepubescent posse of eight were certainly at home in the 'hood, but not so jaded that they couldn't still wonder about the world. And true to the inner city, the Kids weren't too much protected by adults as by *Fat Albert's* unwavering faith in an all-for-one/one-for-all code of honor. (Wish there'd been some homegirls on the show, too, but hey...)

The most fun part of every episode was the *Cosby Kids* jamming on instruments made from Disposable Heroes-type junkyard leftovers. Each week for 12 years there was a different song, but the message was the same every time: We have the power to turn alienation into a sense of community, the power to rediscover and reinvent. Hey, hey, hey.

Catheen Campbell is a writer and filmmaker living and working in Harlem.

**Rudy (far left):** So cool in his applejack cap, he didn't even need electricity to play a spanking-new white Stratocaster. Hipper than the others and more restless, he'd often let his ego lead him astray. But the guys would always welcome him back.

**Fat Albert (the big guy):** Rolling along in a gait so mushy, he always seemed to be walking on marshmallows. Sweet, loyal, true to his homeboy heart, leading by the example of generosity, Al was always looking out for his friends. "Hey, hey, hey."

**Weird Harold (behind Fat Albert):** Mysteriously looking more like *The Cos* himself than his brother Russell, Harold appeared collegiate in a sportcoat and high-water pants—he didn't say much, but that bugged-out look in his eye spoke volumes.

**Bucky (far right):** Quiet but reliable, Bucky was an orthodontist's rescue project with a haircut you could sue for. This wasn't no glamor boy, but the love of the crew was more than skin deep.



**Mush Mouth (second from left):** Spilling out of clothes two sizes too small, he mumbled and stuttered like he'd had so many words choked up inside the syllables only escaped in front of the other kids, who never got tired of trying to understand him.

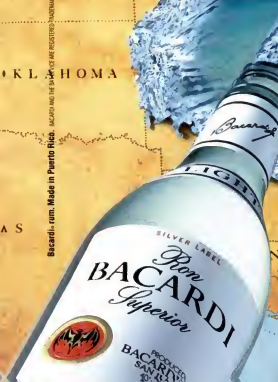
**Russell (third from left):** Cosby's younger brother with the baby voice, who often wisecracked on the pretensions of his elders. Constantly bundled up in a scarf and hat, the youngest member of the crew was dressed for winter all year round and seeking warmth within the security of the group.

**Bill (fourth from left):** The portrait of *Cos* as a young man, he was surprisingly low-key and studious, not the class clown you'd expect of a future comedian.

**Dumb Donald (second from right):** His droopy lips peek through a cap that has no known name, looking like the hat your moms never should've left to dry on the radiator. Apparently Donald wasn't ready to unmask his intelligence.

# JUST ADD **BACARDI**

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